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AUTHOR OF "THE QUEEN'S SHILLING," "LOLA," "A WAYWARD  
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# RENDELSHOLME.

*A NOVEL.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY

ANNIE M. ROWAN.

VOL. II.



London :

REMINGTON AND CO.,

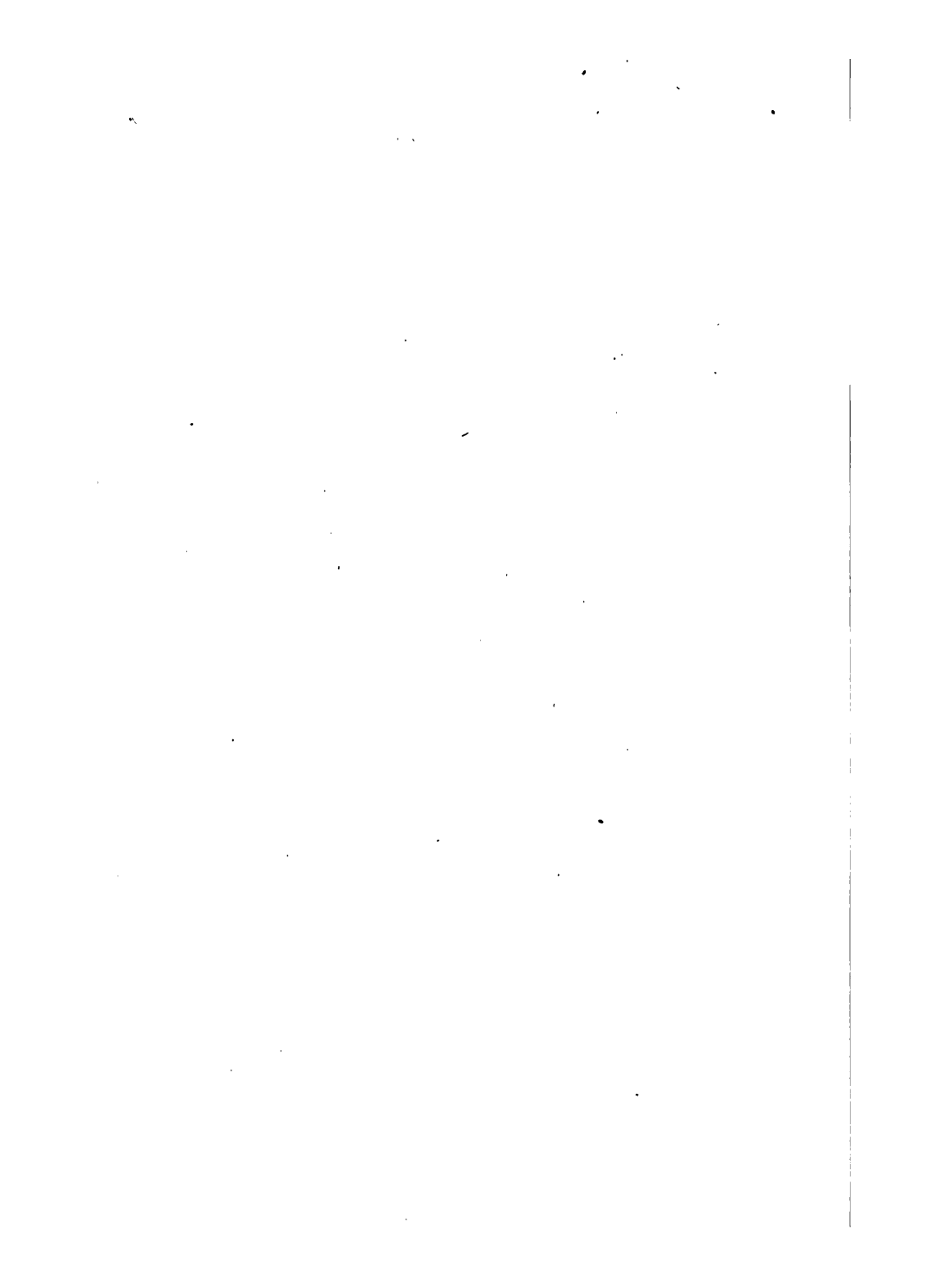
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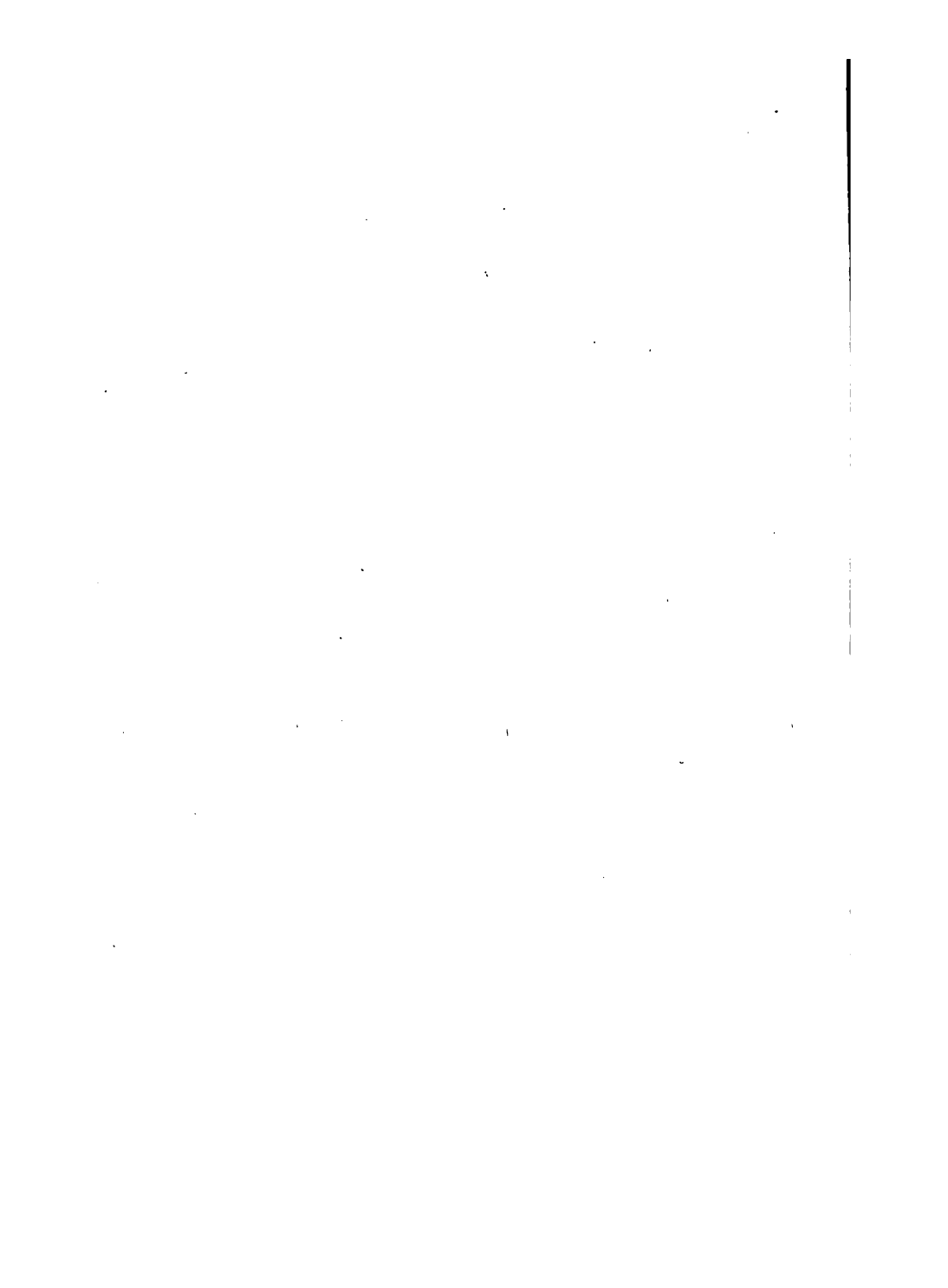




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# RENDELSHOLME.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE BEATING OF HER OWN HEART IS ALL THE  
SOUND SHE HEARS!

LIKE a pale lily she lay, prone, softly cushioned on the new-cut hay, with a storm of sweet and bitter passions sweeping through her soul.

Sweet, because she had found the keynote of her womanhood. Bitter, because the sensitive soul recognised the universal law—that, having eaten of the tree of knowledge, her sorrows would be multiplied.

She wept long and silently.

The laughing sunshine is no longer a joy to her eyes, rather a bitter mockery of her woe, as it gambols with riotous, wanton freedom around, kissing her tear-stained cheek with brisk, unwelcome greeting.

Presently Marie sobbed herself to sleep.

As she slept, she looked a very snow-flake. Her sweet face was turned heavenward, and one soft cheek rested against the silvery bark of the friendly beech tree, who, in company with his fellows, sang a soft, low lullaby—a sweet rhythm, that with ceaseless murmur soothed the tired child cradled at his feet. The crooning of the summer air through those lordly beeches was like fairy music, and, as the monotonous song of the anxious nurse calms the fractious child to peaceful slumber, so Nature's nurse sung this poor child to rest—sent her to sleep, though the heavy dew-drops still glistened on the dark lashes, and the tear-stains were undried upon her cheek.

We must leave her to rest while we return to the Castle—to the library—to the bay window—to Mrs. Devereux.

Mrs. Devereux was still a beautiful woman, with a proud face, eagle eyes and raven hair, that now, alas ! was showing tiny threads of silver.

As she sat in that bay window and watched the graceful figures of the two cousins as they disappeared beneath the shade

of the beeches, a startled gleam first arose—then grew to a broad dismay—as the confirmation of a hitherto vague doubt cast a deep shadow on her face.

For some time phantom fears, hazy ideas, had haunted Mrs. Devereux's brain. Now these ghostly shadows took substantial form, which rose up and stood between her and her soul's desire.

Suddenly the conviction burst on her. Den. loved Marie! He would ask her, and she would consent to be his bride.

Poor mother! Hurriedly she reviewed the incidents of the last few weeks. Hundreds, thousands of trifles, unnoticed at the time, now recurred to her—stood photographed on her brain with vivid, uncompromising distinctness, that left no doubt of the climax she feared.

He had learned to love, and taught Marie to love all those happy, smooth spring days; and, now the summer was come, the tempting early fruit was fully ripe; he had but to reach out his hand and secure the rich treasure.

So the unhappy mother thought, as her

anxious eyes followed them ; while they, unconscious of her watching, sauntered leisurely along, enjoying the delicious present, reveling in the sweets of their happy existence—the full measure well pressed together and running over—the riches of earthly treasures with which the gods in lavish plenty crowned their young and happy heads.

The light, the air, the trees, the flowers, the birds, the very humming of the insects were ministering on all sides to their pleasure—enhancing their happiness, conducing to their well-being.

All Nature babbled and bubbled over with hearty, joyous welcome, as they moved enjoyingly along, two fair specimens of the last and greatest of God's creations.

Everything around them, from the least to the greatest, combined in contributing to their well-being—these petted, pampered, fair children of the earth. They were a pair who hitherto had been cradled amongst the roses of life ; they had lain softly and fared sumptuously every day. Sin, sorrow, suffering were idle, vague sounds that may have reached their ears ; but certainly were not

realised facts or stern realities to the minds of these chosen children of fortune.

So far, their lips have only sipped daintily from the sweet cream at the top of the cup ; little do they guess how bitter the dregs may be ere they have drained to the end the draught of life that is set before them.

Now, the sun shines ; all is bright and fair. The luxury of sweet life is delicious to the young man and maiden as they saunter out of the sun glare into the cool shade of the beeches. Their lives at the present are a beautiful idyl, a pretty love song—a song that will soon be sung out, an idyl that cannot last. Nature, impetuous Nature, rushing like a torrent, is hurrying them to their doom. There is no escape. They were born ; they live ; they will have to die.

But these two, as *now* their cup is full to overflow, running over with the milk and honey of their most enjoyable existence, which is so sweet and pure and fresh—so soul-satisfying—that happy youth may be pardoned for forgetting that, even in this joyous, bright summer life of theirs, there is a possibility of storm ; lightning may come



and sear their beauty—thunder may turn their present sweets to sour.

As Mrs. Devereux's anxious eyes lost them, the past, the present, and the dreaded future flashed through her brain. Should she rush after and separate them? No use.

She might defer the climax for an hour, a day, a week. What then? It would be all the same in the end. For—Denzil was more enigmatical, more morose, less lover-like than ever.

In vain she had used her mother's influence, in vain she had exercised all her powers of persuasion; the young man would not listen to reason. He was impracticable, his obstinacy most unaccountable; for, notwithstanding his repeated asseverations that he would not marry his cousin, more than once his watchful mother had detected his eyes following Marie's every movement with covert admiration.

Not three days since the furtive eyes from under the lowering brow had watched her leave the room with a pained wistfulness; then the mother had taken courage and spoken.

She was repulsed with an angry oath. He swore he would not do the dastard deed. The fair estate of Rendelsholme was a nothing in his eyes, saddled with the encumbrance of the wife he did not want.

He declared, with intense vehemence, nothing would induce him to sell his soul and sacrifice his cousin for Rendelsholme. In despair his mother had to desist.

And now the mother's heart grew sad and hopeless.

She was still gazing at the spot where the cousins had vanished, when suddenly the room door opened and Captain Devereux lounged in—

“How comes it you are alone? Where are the others?” asked he, abruptly.

She brought her face round from the window—a sad, stern face, out of which her mother's eyes looked up reproachfully at the handsome, restless, daring face that looked down on her enquiringly.

She spoke with concentrated anger and pitiable despair—

“Den. has taken Marie to the hay-field. I have a presentiment, I could almost swear he

is about to do what I would have given my life that you had done—he is going to ask Marie to be his wife.”

The young man had been staring sulkily at her upturned face ; now he turned and sank into a chair somewhat behind her, while she went on bitterly upbraiding—

“ How could you be so intensely silly, so unutterably foolish as not to yield to my entreaties ? She is the nicest girl in the country, and the dear, dear old place ! It makes me wild to think what you have thrown from you. Sometimes, Denzil, I think you are mad.”

“ You are determined to drive me so, I think,” muttered he, gruffly.

“ Me ! my dear ! How ? Why ? What do I do ? What have I ever done but advise you for your good ? ”

She sighed deeply—

“ I never thwarted you in your whole life ; you have always had your own way. Sometimes I think I acted wrong ; that it would have been different—perhaps better for you now—if in the days of your youth I had kept you more in order.”

Then the tears gathered in her eyes as she entreated—

“My son, my dear, dear son, it is not yet too late. I pray you, for God’s sake hearken to my advice. Ask your cousin to be your wife.”

“No! so help me Heaven, no!” thundered he.

Then suddenly calming—

“What nonsense you talk! What is the use of suggesting it if Den. has asked her? If she is going to marry him that settles the question definitely.”

Then sarcastically he asked—

“Pray did he make you his father confessor?”

“No, he has not said a word; but I have eyes and I can see. It is evident he is devoted to her. The full conviction flashed on me now as I watched them walk down the terrace. Oh! it is a shame, a shame, a shame; how you can be such a blind mole,” wailed the unhappy mother. “How you can let that sweet girl be won from you? how you can allow Den. to supplant you? I do not understand; it passes belief!”

“Stuff! don’t tease; you are only making

a fool of yourself. If the girl likes him, let her marry him, it is no affair of mine. Den. will make her a very good husband."

"Probably he will—but that is not the point. It is *you, you* whom I am thinking of. How you can be so weak, how you can let him come inside you in everything. It has always been the way; first he cheated you out of your uncle's affections, now he is winning the girl who ought to be your wife, and with her he will have Rendelsholme—Rendelsholme which ought to be yours. Oh! Denzil, I have so longed to see you master here. It has been the crave of my life. And now, when everything seemed so prosperous, when you could secure a charming wife and the dear old place with one word, you will not say it."

"Pshaw! nonsense, mother—one word, indeed. Little you know about it. Rendelsholme is our Nemesis, I think. Poor little Marie! poor little dove! she will be far happier with Den. than with me. He is the head of the house, and far better head than I would be, and a better husband for her, too, poor child."

The mother burst out indignantly—

“No such thing; I deny it. You are the fit head of the house—the fit husband for Marie—the fit master for Rendelsholme. Den. ought never to have been born, or, at least, he should have died with the rest of them. What right had he to live and come between you and your inheritance—between you and—and—and—oh! my son, it is breaking my heart, it is.” She spoke wildly.

Captain Devereux laughed a loud ha! ha! ha! He rose, thrust back his chair violently.

“Breaking your heart! By Jove! that is good. He has rather taken the wind out of my sails, I confess; but what is the use of making a poor mouth. He is a real good fellow, and I wish him every luck. If he loves the girl and she loves him, let him be happy—not another word, mother.”

“If you had only let her, I am sure she would have loved you,” wailed the mother.

“Damnation! it would have been better for *me* if I had never been born, or if they had smothered me at birth.” roared he, plunging out of the room, out through the sash-window on to the terrace, and away,

away, away, with long, swinging active strides. He swung himself over the balcony, with firm feet crunched the gravel of the broad walk, and turning abruptly to the right, was lost under the stately elms. His mother sighed deeply, and her heart sank as she lost sight of him, for with his vanishing figure died the dream of her life. She knew now it could never be—it was too late, too late!

Denzil swang along, going right ahead with angry, quick footsteps; bitter mortification, sore pain gnawed at his heart, which his mother, with her advice, entreaties and insinuations had made more hard to bear. His face was set and stern, deep furrows lined his brow, and the black eyes, once so joyously bright, recklessly daring, looked gloomily on vacancy. His mother's words were as pin pricks to the great gaping wound that was in his own heart. Pin pricks, in themselves trifles, but when pin pricks dig, and scratch, and tear at a deep sword cut, they aggravate a million times the agony of the wound, and are, in actual suffering, ten million times more hard to bear than the deep, big wound

itself. The wound has been given in fair fight; it is endured with fortitude, with courageous patience—but, these pin pricks, they are quite outside all our calculated reserve force of endurance, and they irritate, irritate, irritate till angry nature writhes against their miserable increasing torture, and cries out in agony.

It was with irritation like this tearing and gnawing at his vitals that Denzil strode along, alike indifferent and unconscious of the wealth and beauty that bounteous Nature, all unsolicited, was lavishing beneath his feet, above his head, and on either side of him. What cared he for the delicate beauty of the soft, green velvety moss, bespangled here and there with the golden buttercup, that yield no sound in reply to the hurried tread of his angry feet. What heeded he the blue canopy overhead, or the kindly, kingly trees that spread their great arms to shield him from the laughing face of the cruel bright sun, that otherwise would have burnt his secret out of him, shown clear and distinct the agony and anger, the self-abasement and the wild de-



sire that was driving him he knew not whither.

On he went, tramp, tramp, tramp, through the wood, across the open meadow, over the ox-rails, striding through the green turnips—on, on, over height and through hollow.

At last, he has made a wide circuit, and his instinct has brought him to a hill top. There, underneath him, lies fair Rendelsholme, the home—for it has always been home to him—that he loves so well. It stretches a very fair picture at his feet. The sun is sinking in the west; tall, grey and stately between him and its yellow glory rises the dear old Castle, with its quaint towers wrapt tightly in the loving embrace of the clinging ivy. The mosaiced garden, with its broad, straight walks, lies calm and still, concentrating the rays of the sun on its gorgeous masses of reds, yellows, blues and virgin whites. On the one side the noble elms rise their mighty heads skywards in solemn state; on the other, the spreading beeches wave their willowy arms and graceful heads high against the dead gold sky. The peaceful kine are grazing on the lawn, or leisurely chewing the

cud as they wait the herdsman and the herdsman's dog. The hay field is empty now. Basking in the sun, the last of the merry hay-makers is trudging along, loitering behind the others to whisper soft words with a girl whom he knows loves him, and whom he means to make his wife. The handsome oaks are shining in their burnished garments of bronzed green, tinged here and there with tender red, standing singly, alone in their possession of the fair front lawn, where gentle hind and antlered deer take refuge under their far-spreading shade.

There is a group of copper beech away to the west—rich dark, weighed down with its handsome foliage, standing out in bold relief from the sap-green spruce behind. Away again, this time to the east, in the blue mist of the coming evening, can be seen dark masses of pine, their red trunks lit up by the parting sunlight's good-night kiss. Hill and dale, forest and field, all is Rendelsholme. All is very dear to him. What, if he must leave it?

He looks long and sadly. His hair is wet and dank on his clammy brow, his face grows

hard and set, and the dark eyes have a world of deep despair in their anguished gaze as he mutters—

“It is hard—very hard; but I must go—leave it all, and never see Rendelsholme again. God help me—how cruel Fate has been to me, and what a fool I am.”

He is panting; in his anguish great sobs rise up in his chest, and seem to smother him. He throws himself on the ground, face downwards, and grinds and tears at the tender grass as he wrestles with the demon within him.

He is sore beset. The fight is hard. The devil is strong and the temptations are fierce. How fierce, God only knows. He is not a man accustomed to resist his passions or his fancies; hitherto self-will, self-indulgence has been his bane. He has never thought of others; ever of his own gratification. Self-indulged before matured reason had put its guiding hand to the helm, has given him many hours of bitter repentance when awakened conscience has stung him sharply. But never such a bitter hour as this; when, torn with agony of remorse and self-reproach,

he feels his own hand puts away from him the one thing his soul desires—puts it away because he must.

Over his head tower the vernal arches of the giant trees—solemn and silent like the Gothic aisles of a mighty church. There is no sound to break the soul-tranquilising stillness of that forest temple on the high hill-top, where the young man lies all alone; wrestling with the sins and sorrows of his own untutored heart. He wears out his soul as he lies there grovelling in his self-made misery. Bitterly the words keep droning in his ears, mocking him, “As a man makes his bed, so he must lie on it.” And “Be ye sure your sin will find you out.”

Presently he springs from his lair, stands on his feet, and draws himself together—a noble-looking man, with a fine face, despite that conflicting storm of ungoverned passions that sweep like angry thunder-clouds across his brow.

He looks again, hungrily, to the east, to the west, and straight before him at the sweet pictures of Rendelsholme lying so peacefully almost at his feet. He stretches out his arms.

wide with a wild craving in his face; then folds them moodily across his breast, and next strides forward, carrying with him a stern, moody face. Thus he plunges recklessly down the steep face of the hill, almost a cliff, crushing the bracken and the bilberry ruthlessly under his impetuous feet; through the laced arms of the waving blackberries he pushes, careless alike of the rolling stones and loosened earth that follow and precede his track. Steeper and steeper grows the descent. What reeks he as he swings himself from bough to bough, and crushes down through the thick underwood and dank sward. A few daring springs and he is at the bottom, lost in the wild tangles of the nut grove, with its undergrowth of mighty fern and clinging trails of blackberry, studded here and there with its pretty star-like white pink blossoms, dainty in their rustic simplicity. Through this he quickly forces a passage, leaps the ha-ha, and lands in the new-cut meadow, where so lately the merry hay-makers had been singing, making up the sweet piles of scented hay. Oblivious of the sweet scents that breathe of summer, he

crosses the field. Straight in his eyes shines the western sun, now low in the horizon. A long black shadow—an impish, elfish misrepresentation of self—strays behind him, fantastically leaping the sweet smelling winds of piled hay ; then trailing long and lank on the green grass behind him. The mighty beeches throw a black wall of shadow on the field before him. Through their density here and there a small thread of golden glory pierces ; but the grove itself is sombre, dark, dank and cool.

Hither he comes swiftly, heated from his walk. He leaves the sunshiny world steeped in its yellow glory behind him, as he steps under the shade of the whispering beeches, whispering very softly now in the still of the calm June evening. The cooing of the wood pigeon is the only sound heard in the distance. All else seems gone to sleep in this cool dark wood. He gives a great indrawn sigh of satisfaction as the chill of the shade meets his hot throbbing brow. He slackens his pace and walks slowly along, winding in and out through the silvery trunks of the murmuring beeches.

Suddenly he stops short. The red blood rushes teeming to his brain. His eyes flash. The strong hands are clenched fiercely together, and, before he has time to consider, one word escapes him—

“Marie!”

It was very low; breathed more than uttered.

Once before—only this afternoon—hardly three hours ago, the same simple name, Marie, breathed in that shaded wood, had brought a revelation to the young girl’s soul; had opened her book of life; shown herself to herself. And now?

Though it is only a murmur, she has heard. With one spring she raises herself from the bed of soft scented hay, where so carelessly graceful she has lain unconscious; she has no idea how long.

The large hat with the drooping feather has fallen back; the unruly golden hair has escaped from its strict bonds of propriety. Her whole face is bathed in conscious blushes, the sweet curved lips are trembling, and the eyes—the true blue eyes—are vainly trying

to hide the new-found secret of her womanhood. So she stands panting before him.

For one moment their eyes meet; then both their hearts beat quicker. The white lids droop and the black curved lashes line themselves on the blushing cheek, where wave after wave of rich carnation finds a place, slips up to the roots of her hair, and creeps down on the snow-white throat. Every pulse in her being is tingling. She is in a sweet agony of distress.

They neither of them spoke.

His face was an enigma, where many conflicting emotions strove for the mastery. Overwhelming surprise was followed by an agony of doubt, swallowed up and lost in a mad joyousness, a wild whirl that mellowed, softened and unfolded into the tenderest love. Then, indeed, Denzil's face was beautiful to behold. Alas! it was but a momentary vision. A craven fear was somehow born in the loving eye. He shivered; his eyes fell. Then again the hot blood surged to his brain, and, mastered by a mad desire, he stretched out his arms and, without a word, folded them round her tightly—tightly.



He drooped his tall head, and his hot lips tremblingly touch here and there, the wavy golden hair that is pillowed on his breast. His face is moved and very tender now—ashy pale. He gasps, but he does not speak, and a fierce red light burns in the black eyes that with greedy desire look down on the little white flower, who, overwhelmed with her own sensations, is unconscious of the trouble in his. She lies still resting, ah! how willingly, in his strong arms.

It is but a moment or two that he holds her thus. A brief period of time; but in that moment two hearts have lived through an eternity of—what? Perhaps bliss.

His breath came hot and thick. With a long drawn sigh he presently unswathes the arms that have wrapped her so closely, and with trembling hands holds her a little out from him, so that he can see the drooped outlines of the mobile face.

“Is it true—is it true?” he asks, hoarsely.

She utters nothing. She is passive in his grasp; dimly aware of the fact that two passionate eyes are reading anxiously every line of her eloquent face.

“My love, my love, my precious flower,” he cries, and gathers her to his breast again.

The beating of her own heart is all the sound she hears. Its wild throbs drown the low murmur of his whispered love.

He crushes her to his heart fiercely. The touching her seems to have driven him mad. He is like one possessed as he pours his tale of passion wildly incoherent in her ear.

She lies trembling on his breast—this pure white dove that has found her home. The music is playing in her heart at last—singing wild shouts of joyous melody.

At last he sets her imprisoned body free, but keeps holding the little hand tightly in his as he leads her through the wood. Along the terrace and in through the open sash window to the twilight drawing-room, where Mrs. Devereux is sitting alone and sad.

The girl is a picture of happy confusion as she stands. The wealth of golden hair broken loose, falling in wavy masses below her slender waist; the starry eyes shining, the whole face beaming love.

Hand in hand they stand before Mrs. Devereux. Denzil is calm and still; he has

drilled himself back into his usual manner, half-careless, half-insolently daring. He says roughly, almost sulkily—

“Here we are, mother; she loves me. I hope you are satisfied.”

The mother’s heart gave one wild bound; then she folded the girl to her heart, exclaiming—

“My dear children you have made me the happiest of mothers. God bless you both.”

The next moment she looked at her son. How had this delightful and unexpected consummation of her wishes been brought about? Her anxious eyes questioned him unsuccessfully. His face is hard and set; his haughty, proud lips are closed defiantly; no love smile softened the handsome outline; the dark, passionate eyes are filled with a smouldering fire, wherein all love’s joy seemed burnt up with anguish. The whole man is mightily moved; he evidently controls himself by a strong effort, but the passions that seemed to sway him apparently are not akin to love. Misery, bitter anguish surge uppermost, to be conquered and submerged by fierce determination. His mien is certainly not

reassuring. It is even less satisfactory than his few curt words, totally devoid of an exultant lover's pride or pleasure. Looks and words alike express a dogged determination, fierce appropriation—nothing more.

Sadly the mother's eyes fall, with them her heart sank; through all the proud exultation of Rendelsholme being thus secured, all the gratification of having obtained her heart's desire, a thought of pain, fear—dread of she knows not what—intrudes itself.

Marie heard his few short, abrupt words with a hurt surprise. His tone was so cold and hard it seemed as if he hated her. Was that happy half-hour under the beeches a delusion, a wild dream?

Ah! no, it is true, true, true, the love notes keep singing in her heart, as the nervous clasp of his strong hand, still crushing her little fingers as in a vice, tells her.

To others, no matter how cold, cruel, abrupt, ungracious he may be, she feels certain he loves her. With the knowledge of that love to sustain her she feels she can bear all things, endure all things for his sake. There, standing by his side, she takes

up her burden of life bravely—self-abnegation—that most rare attribute even amongst the most womanly women, vowing that from henceforth to herself she will be individually nothing, but to him all things, as he will be to her.

There is answering pressure in the little fingers that tingle so with the strong grasp of his as she thinks what a wayward love he is, and yet how dear, how unspeakably precious in her eyes.

## CHAPTER II.

WHERE THOU GOEST I WILL GO.

LORD RENDELSHOLME took a hurried flight to town.

Mrs. Devereux was so delighted with the unlooked for turn of events that she never mentioned, possibly never wasted a thought on him.

Marie kept her own counsel.

And Denzil, if he had any suspicions, wisely held his tongue.

Ere twenty-four hours had elapsed, the fact of Miss Devereux's engagement to Captain Devereux was generally known and discussed by every tongue in and about Rendelsholme.

Father Sinclair received the intelligence with much chagrin—he was bitterly disappointed. He had never liked the boy, he disliked the man, and had very many and decided objections to the match. He expressed his opinions pretty forcibly, and said, with his permission it should never be.

He argued with Marie. Told her Captain Devereux was a wild, careless, godless man, with an ungovernable temper, utterly reckless, unsettled character; no fit husband for any girl—especially unsuited to a gentle, timid, unsophisticated child like her. He would prove her bane, not her blessing, and make her life one long misery.

Besides, their creeds differed; she *must* give him up. Her having accepted him was a childish folly, to be excused on account of her youth and ignorance. The sooner she re-called her promise the better. Father Sinclair declared he neither could nor would sanction their union.

But, to persuade a woman against her will is a Herculean task, beyond the power of most men; to persuade a woman like Marie quite beyond the power of Father Sinclair.

She had always had a gentle, steadfast, modest mind. Had bowed to authority, and submitted to his dictates when under his immediate supervision. She had been an easily trained plant in the convent hot-house. But, planted out in the fresh soil and the open air, she had changed imperceptibly, and gained

an individuality of her own; an individuality stamped with the Devereux steadfastness. Her grandfather, Denzil, had not been more constant to his fickle love than she would be to her chosen one.

She was still a modest flower, a simple daisy, that bent her head to the storm, to raise it again when the storm passed, more vigorous than ever. Patiently she listened, while the priest argued and stormed, but persistently claimed, that, free to marry; she might plant her love where she chose; she had chosen, and the simple little daisy had grown very sturdy indeed.

In the convent she had been mere potter's clay; a child of a plastic nature, easily moulded by the master hand; subservient in all things to the authority she believed it her duty to submit to, guided entirely by her spiritual director.

But her year's emancipation from cramped restraint had given her room to grow; contact with enlarged minds had opened her eyes, circumstances had considerably altered all this, completely metamorphosed her character. Secluded and repressed, she



had existed. Enfranchised she had learned to live. Lately new and subtle agencies had been at work, and somehow the potter's clay had been mysteriously transformed into more enduring metal-steel. Now the steel was refining, polishing, preparing to hold its own through all the diverse turns of fate.

Father Sinclair, clever man though he was, could find no arguments—though a sacred priest, no authority; though an astute Jesuit, no threats wherewith to make the young girl give up the man she loved.

He was completely foiled, had to retire discomfited, for, with all his cleverness he could find no means to bend or break the girl's fixed resolve.

Persuasion, threats, priestly denunciations were all alike—of no avail; they fell impotent to the ground. She was deaf to his entreaties, blind to his fears, indifferent to his assumed authority.

Gently, but very firmly, she turned them all aside.

He had told her she was free to marry—urged that it was her duty to do so. She had accepted the duty. She loved her cousin;

he had chosen her. She had given her promise, and she would keep it.

Again and again Father Sinclair urged his objections, assailing her on every side.

Again and again the girl eluded his arguments, and daily more daringly repeated her rebellious resolution.

He loved her; she loved him. She had promised to marry him, and no power could make her give him up.

He was very dear to her. The worse and more turbulent his nature, the more he would need her tender care. She knew her presence was as oil on the troubled waters of his soul. If there was risk she would gladly take it. If there was suffering in store for her, she would cheerfully bear it for his dear sake.

Mrs. Devereux was very indignant at Father Sinclair's interference—angry at the doubts and fears that he suggested—and urgently pressed on the marriage.

And Denzil? He was a puzzle. He acted like one possessed. He was more capricious than ever in his moods and manners. Sometimes he would avoid Marie; other times be

savagely impatient; then passionately declare she was an angel; he would entreat her to marry him at once. The next moment he would cry out to her to leave him—to let him bear his hard life alone, and go and be happy with someone else; that he was unworthy, and his love a curse to her.

Then she would gently soothe him, treat him as a loving mother would a fractious child, rather than as young girls generally do their lovers.

His love-making was very exceptionable—a sort of whirlwind, that climaxed in a tornado, when he would frantically implore her to be always good to him as she was now, and never, never, never to cease loving him, no matter what came.

It certainly was a strange wooing. He never hid his violent temper, made no secret of his mad passions, and urged her to give him up quite as often as he besought her to marry him.

But the more violent and unreasonable he showed himself the closer she clung to him, and hourly, with shy, girlish sympathy, she assured him of her love and constancy.

She soothed his sullenness, cheered his despondency, and as often as he vowed he was unworthy of her love, a miserable, God-forgotten man, whom, the sooner she gave up the better, the oftener she would win him back to a brighter mood ; when, overmastered with a passionate longing, he would gather her to himself, beg her to forget his words, to forgive his wicked temper, to be patient with him, to love him always.

“ For better, for worse, my darling ! No matter how bad, how cruel I may be, promise you will never hate me, but love me always as you do now.”

She ever answered him with the same tender, loving words. She watched him continually ; and, no matter what his mood, was gentle, patient, loving. She was a slave to his every whim, actually knew no will but his ; every day her life became more absorbed with his, and her whole time was occupied soothing his savage humours and ministering to his pleasure.

Alas ! poor Marie ! Alas ! poor child, it is a heavy cross for a weak girl to struggle under.

Mrs. Devereux was anxious to have the

wedding immediately. Denzil urged it. Marie could offer no tangible objection when he pressed her to name a day. Blushing and laughing, she suggested Christmas.

"Christmas!" echoed he. "My dear child, how am I to live without you all that time? My duty calls me away from this. For pity sake do not send me out into the cold world alone for all those months. I may be ordered abroad, have to go to the war, may never come back alive. Oh! my darling, do not send me away to die without my wife's dear kisses on my lips, my wife's dear, dear kisses."

The last dozen words were a wail of entreaty which she could not resist. But ere she had time to reply, he started up excitedly, exclaiming—

"Would to God we had never met. It would have been better for you if you had never seen my ill-omened self. I have no right to darken your fair young life with the black curse of mine. I have no right to ask you to link your fate with mine; no right—no right, I say, when—when—there is war." His voice faltered, he panted for breath, then

continued, in a low, hoarse voice, hurriedly :  
“Any day I may be ordered to the front, may be bowled over, an end put to my graceless existence. Then, poor child, what is to become of you? I tell you, the priest was right; I am no fitting husband for you; the dove should not mate with the hawk. It would be ten thousand times better for us to part now, before more evil comes of our love.” Then he burst out: “But *I* cannot do it; I am too weak. Child! child! I struggled long before I brought this grief into your existence. You will never know all I suffered before I claimed you; all the battles I fought for your dear sake ere I yielded to temptation, and asked you to be my very own.”

Very low and gentle she answered—

“Whether you had claimed me or not Denzil, it would have been all the same,” she blushed deeply, “for no one else could ever be to me what you are. I love you. It is too late to talk of parting now. God has given you to me, and I will not give you up. Do not talk of it again; I can bear anything but that.”

Finally, Mrs. Devereux came to the rescue, and suggested August for the wedding. There was no reason why they should delay longer; so the first Thursday in the month was fixed on.

The intervening weeks were spent by Captain Devereux with his regiment. Every day he wrote incoherent letters, that pained as much as they pleased sweet Marie. Outbursts of passionate love, ending in condemnatory phrases, declaring his love was a curse, sure to work evil; advising her to give him up. Then the next letter would be an appeal or entreaty to her to forget all his doubts, to forgive him, and to love him always.

And she did—she loved him always—loved him in spite of his folly; loved him in his sullenness, his sadness, his sad despair, and his sin.

Loved him as it is given to few women to love; with a steadfast loyalty, and an utter forgetfulness of self. Loving him with a full, forgiving love, when a woman of less constant temperament would have turned from him. Loving him with an all-enduring

affection, that pitied and excused his every fault, and that daily strove to raise and encourage the finer instincts of his higher nature, which early self-indulgence had blunted and almost obliterated.



## CHAPTER III.

### WINNING THE STAKES.

THE midsummer sun was keeping high holiday, smiling its brightest and best, while the well-dressed crowd were swarming round the course, as the locusts did over the land of Egypt; and yet, notwithstanding these advantageous circumstances, the summer meeting of the great metropolis of the West was a take in—had fallen flat. Backers had had a sore time of it, and the knowing ones of the ring had been severely hit.

As the *Sporting Times* feelingly put it—

“It was hard lines that Jonas ran a brute; harder still that Tallyho broke down—worse again that Formosa behaved so disgustingly; her connection, thoroughly disheartened, felt obliged to strike her out of her coming engagements. It was annoying that in the ‘big race’ the entries were few, and more trying still to find that the favourites were ‘no-

where.' It was a 'facer,' a bad day for the ring, when Daisy, a mere baby in years, but an old one in manners, took the field by storm and carried all before her. This dashing *débutante*—a two thousand guinea yearling—ran a very pretty race indeed, slipped through all her horses and showed them a clean set of heels—apparently without distressing herself in the least. This *rara avis*, Daisy, goes for the 'July Stakes' next week, and, carrying 8st. 9lb., stands to win."

On reading this last paragraph, old Rogers chuckled and rubbed his hands, murmuring to Mr. Freeze—

"Stands to win, does she? P'raps yes; but you and I think otherwise—eh, old friend? We know a trick worth two of that!"

To which the other answered sententiously—

"Time will tell; anyhow, we will do our best."

The weather was gorgeous, July was at her brightest and best—airily dancing along, throwing the bright beams of her jocund, joyous countenance on all that came and went.

The full glory of this sunshine illumined the Newmarket course—shone alike on the fair ladies, the fine men, the handsome horses, the jockeys and the vermin rogues that infested the gay scene; shone on these black plague spots that mar and destroy the enjoyment of this finest of old English sports, as brightly and cheerily as on the fairest and best.

As usual, the July gathering at Newmarket was select, affected more by the sporting world than by the fashionable mob; and, as usual, the hawk-eyed and hooked-nose business gentlemen expected a rich harvest. There was brisk business done. Men with tight gaiters, bird's-eye neckties, and a general horseyness about them, looked knowing as they button-holed other "birds of a feather" who, in loose brown overcoats and white hats, lounged in, round and about the enclosure, and talked the cabalistic jargon of their trade.

Apparently trade was running up; betting ran high, and Daisy was emphatically the favourite; the odds were twenty to one in her favour. Calypso also was marked dangerous,

and ten to one was freely taken on her against the field.

The two-year-olds were a handsome string. As the *cogniscenti* reviewed them and canvassed their merits, they doubted not that at Newmarket they would retrieve their last week's misfortunes.

Calypso's admirers had no hesitation in backing her against the field; and Daisy's admirers were equally confident of her success; no other was named as likely to win. The Duchess was not even thought of; she was untried, and—Rendelsholme was out of fashion. The "profession" passed her by almost unnoticed, and took what offers there were—against her.

Pigeons were plenty—dropping feathers freely; the hawks evidently expected a good day.

Old Rogers and Mr. Freeze were "looking up old friends," and heartily welcomed by their *confrères*.

"Heartily glad to see you on the turf again, Mr Freeze. Where have you hid yourself all these years?" queried one.

"Hollo! that you, old friend? This is a

jolly surprise. What have you brought with you?" inquisitively asked another.

While a third exclaimed—

"Damn it, man! but I am glad. I do like to see the old faces about, and a pretty sight it is to look at."

"Why, man, I thought you must be dead and buried! What has happened you all these years?—missed you at Newmarket for many seasons, Mr Freeze."

"Where the devil did you hide yourself, and what have you brought us?"

"Be hanged if the old man don't look as fresh as paint—as jolly as old bones! What have you done to yourself, old friend?" laughed another.

All round they welcomed him. As the last friend wrung his hand, he sententiously replied—

"Slept!" and chuckled as he spoke.

"Ha! ha!" laughed his friend. "Slept like a weasel, I guess. Ah! Johnny Freeze, my friend, you are as dry a card as ever; come, let's have a drink—brandy, stout, ale, what you will—anything to wet our whistle."

"And Mr. Rogers also—let us all have a

drink, and then we'll talk of business. Have you seen that Daisy filly? She is a rare good 'un. I saw her at Liverpool last week, and a pretty sight she was; she went like greased lightning. From the beginning to the end she had it all her own way; she slipped away from the ruck at once—not one of the lot had a chance. Tallyho laboured to the front, but he utterly broke down at the distance, and was nowhere in the race. But tell me—how about this mare of yours? Is she any good?"

"A nice galloper—a well-bred one every way."

"She looks soft."

"Does she? Mr. Rogers says not; that's his department," laughed Mr. Freeze. "If you are inclined to try your luck, I am not afraid to bet on her—say, ten to one against the field."

"What! same as Calypso?"

Freeze nodded. He was not a man of many words.

"Lord bless you, man! You *are* putting your foot in it."

"Devil a fear! Will you take me?"

"It's robbery!"

"That's my look out. Say done."

"Well, if you will, in sovs., for old acquaintance sake, there is my hand on it; but—take an old friend's advice, and don't you go losing your money on a rank outsider."

Freeze chuckled as he walked away; the old man was fond of chuckling, and his rosy, good-humoured round face positively shone as, linking his arm in Rogers', he walked away, confidentially advising his friend as he went—

"Now, Rogers, my man, we will make a good thing of this—only, don't you let your tongue wag too freely. Our friends are very civil—too civil by half. They are more than half inclined to laugh at us as two old dotards; guess they'll laugh the other side of their mouths before they are many hours older. They don't know *us* or the mare; but *I* know a winner when I sees her."

"And so do I," grunted the other.

The co-partners were very confident of their success.

"The odds is all against us," announced Freeze.

"All the better for us," asserted Rogers.

Freeze nodded.

"I mean to pile the money on," continued Rogers. "My old woman is dead set on winning the price of her new ribbons."

There was a merry twinkle in his eye as he spoke.

"Aha ! so she may, and a braw silk gown to the back of that. I tell you, man, the tide has turned, and we are on the road to fortune."

"Yes," assented Rogers. "The only thing that damps me is the new master we are to have. Dang it, Freeze, but a turn like that chills the heart in a man's breast. I felt so sure it would be his lordship ; it ought to have been him. It would have doubled my pleasure if I could have brought the winner to him. And somehow I have a queer feel—a superstition—that no luck will follow us any more."

"Damn your superstition, you blockhead. The young gentlemen are chips of the same block ; it is only fair our young lady should please herself and take her choice. And what the devil has the marriage to say to the



“races ? Keep your fears to yourself. You rile me, that you do, with your ridiculous fancies ; it all comes of the misfortune of your having had an Irishwoman for your dam. Luck ! fear ! superstition ! I wonder at you, that I do. Any way, whatever you feel, keep a quiet tongue in your head, and don’t get yourself into hot water for nothing.”

For all his indignant splutter, old Freeze was, and looked almost as uncomfortable as his companion, who went on with a sad shake of his head—

“It do take the heart out of a man, I say, when he sees things go so awful contrary. It is like matching a wild kestrel with a young dove ; no luck can come of it at all, mind, I tell you so.”

“For God’s sake let us mind our own business, and do you shut up your Irish blather. Now, what are you going to do about the mare ?”

“She shall carry every penny I possess.”

“And mine also.”

The two old men recklessly took up every bet against the mare—backed her for all they possessed, and more ; and we are bound to

confess, if Dame Fortune is unkind, these two well-to-do, respectable old men will be ruined for life, for they have plunged wildly, as wildly as if they were young men fresh from college. This day the Duchess is to make or break their fortunes.

At last the eventful hour has come.

Freeze is stolid, Rogers in a nervous twitter of excitement—so moved that he has dashed away his usually indispensable straw as he glides quickly through the crowd, where he is painfully aware that the *vox populi* of the sporting world is dead against his winning, and seeks the saddling paddock to have a last word with Johnny Osborne, and a last look at the Duchess before she runs to win.

Freeze, too, strolls up to the enclosure. With a chuckle he confidentially nudges his friend and partner, whispering—

“They think we are behind the times, do they? Ha! ha! They’ll open their eyes presently, for the mare is real good—by Ted-dington, out of Maid of Masham. She cannot fail us, and Johnny is the man to ride her, if only he has his usual luck.”

“There goes the saddling bell”—panted

Rogers, "and, good Lord, isn't it queer there is not one of the family here to see her."

"Worse luck their's. Come lead her out," growled Freeze.

What a handsome picture the twelve two-year-olds made.

Daisy walked out first—a lady every hair of her—a dapple brown with four white stockings, springy pasterns, a long, low, lengthy frame, and a lean, well-set head, she looked like going, every inch of her, and was received with a buzz of approbation.

Calypso came next, a decidedly handsome bay, sleek as a mouse, showy, and full of dash. As she danced excitedly along some shook their heads and said, "There is a little too much of her."

Oakall followed, Bird-in-the-hand, Midge, and the others; last of all Duchess walked out, sleepily quiet, with Johnny Osborne equally *nonchalant* seated on her back. As she followed meekly in the ruck no special comment was made on the sleek, well-turned bay—wonderfully formed for her tender age.

On the course Daisy paced up and down like the well behaved thorough-bred lady she

was, as if fully aware of, and appreciating the sensation she created. Calypso dashed to the right, then to the left, and was duly admired. Oakall cantered past the stand, Bird-in-the-hand, and Teetotaller followed. Midge, a pretty, restless, flea-bitten grey, fidgetted uneasily while the preliminaries for the start were arranging. The Duchess stood patiently with her gentle eyes looking about as if thoroughly astonished at her surroundings.

“Johnny, mind you let the mare go her own way,” entreated Rogers.

The jockey nodded as he replied—

“Never fear; we’ll land the stakes if she is fit.”

“Fit as a fiddle, my boy,” were the trainer’s last words.

In another moment they were off; off like a flight of swallows. A breathless moment. Then a blood bay with the blue jacket stole to the front, and the horses spread like an open fan behind her. A few more minutes and the numbers ran up: “Duchess, 1; Daisy, 2; Calypso, 3.

The two old men turn and looked one  
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another in the face with a delighted grin, then hurry off and follow the winner, whom Johnny Osborne is quietly walking to the scales. They are so elated that they scarcely waste a thought on the low murmur of surprise, or the many blank and crestfallen faces that stare at the unexpected winner.

"This is a proud day," hisses Rogers through his teeth.

"Aye! old friend, the turn of our luck. Now for the St. Leger," whispered Freeze, confidentially.

This is how the *Sporting Times* chronicled the forgoing event:—

"The little meeting 'behind the ditch' has been as select and quite as pleasant as usual. The event of the day was, of course, the 'July Stakes,' though here again, as last week at Liverpool, 'backers' had a sore time. The 'ring' will long remember how the favourite was ruthlessly upset, and the course cleared by a startling outsider. This unexpected winner, who fairly took the field by storm is the result of a purchase made at the late Mr. —'s

stables. She is a strapping filly—a blood bay, with magnificent quarters, a great depth of chest, and a head like a deer. She won her race, in stable phraseology, ‘all the way.’ She skimmed the ground like a bird, winning with ease, a length and plenty of pipes to spare. Daisy appeared to be in difficulties from the first, and laboured heavily at the rise, though she ran gamely to the end and made a fair second. Calypso ran third. We heartily congratulate Rendelsholme on the acquisition of this lovely filly, who stands a good chance for the St. Leger if she will only try.”

It was with high hopes Freeze and Rogers entered the Duchess for the St. Leger, a little hurt at the sad fact that no one at the Castle took the least notice of their brilliant success. Lord Rendelsholme was absent; Captain Devereux with his regiment in Ireland, and Miss Devereux, fully occupied in preparations for her wedding, was not aware of the fact; or, even if aware, would scarcely have appreciated the triumph of Rendelsholme owning this startling winner,

whose name was now a household word in half the houses in the kingdom.

The astonishing performances of the mare in her second race confirmed the good opinion already formed of her abilities.

“The Duchess won the St. Leger. Daisy again met her, but the mare has lost form—evidently gone stale since the Liverpool, and was nowhere in the race. Prima Donna started a favourite, but went all about the place, and never had a chance against the clipper from Rendelsholme. The entries were large, and Mr. Johnstone had the proud satisfaction of lifting off from his judge’s box the first five, all within half a length of each other! They were, Duchess, Blink Bonny, Cockatoo, Prima Donna and Angelus, a very promising young one who went steadily from start to finish.”

After this success old Rogers again began to dream of a possible Derby, and winning the blue ribbon before he died.

July fled swiftly—sped along in a bright blaze of sunshine, and vanished into the

following August, who came joyously laden with her many mellowed lights, matured beautiful flowers, and the manifold delights of its lucious fruits.

With August came to Rendelsholme the bridegroom.

A gaunt, wild, worn looking man ; more eccentric than ever. He was in one of his maddest moods.

The evening before the wedding he sought his cousin in the library, and in the dusky twilight flung himself despairingly at her feet, imploring her, even now, at this last moment to "throw him over."

"Leave me," he cried. "I am an unfortunate devil, unworthy to kiss the hem of your garment. I am a brute—a mad devil. Do you hear ?"

Her answer was to stoop and raise the dark head on to her knee, and softly whisper gentle soothing assurance of her love, as she passed her cool, kind fingers over his hot throbbing brow.

He looked anything but a happy, expectant bridegroom, with his ghastly face, bloodshot eyes, and lips hot with fever. He



was more like a mad man, or a desperate criminal awaiting his justly merited doom.

She was very pale and still—calmed him in spite of himself. Presently he drew down the little fingers and pressed them tenderly to his lips, murmuring—

“Child, child, how good you are to me. How cruel and brutal I am to you. I feel I am doing a heartless deed, linking your fair young life with mine.”

“Hush! I will not have you say so.” She laid her little hand on his lips; he kissed and drew it down.

“You *must* hear me—listen, sweet love. Your mind is so pure, your heart so innocent—your whole being so transparent that I can see to the bottom of your soul. Search how I will I see nothing but excellency—nothing but gentle virtues mirrored on the crystal of your being—and—and this ill-placed love for me pervading all.” He spoke slowly, sadly—though they were sitting in the deep shade of the hot August twilight, she blushed, and her heart beat fondly at his words. He knew then how she loved him. “Then, when I look to myself and see the

contrast," his voice swelled to a bitter cry as he went on, "I feel abased. I abhor myself. I am vile, vile, vile—your innocent heart cannot imagine the turpitude of mine. Take warning—leave me ere it is too late, ere I drag your pure spirit down from its lofty aspirations, and contaminate it, smudge and besmear it with the foul miasma of mine. Child, you have no idea how bad I am; how wicked, how deceitful; I do not know myself where my wickedness will end. I am a desperate man."

"Hush! hush! my love, I will not have you blame yourself like this," she cried out like one in pain.

Her little fingers were clasped closely in his, pressed tight to his breast; he bent his head and laid his hot lips lovingly on their cool, soft, polished backs, then he continued—

"My darling! I repeat, I am a desperate man—but with all the depth and strength of my turbulent, untamed heart I love you—I love you, and I know this love will work you ill. If you are wise you will leave me, go away and never look on my unlucky face

again. I tried to make you hate me. I have tried, God only knows how hard to tear myself away. But—but—I cannot do it. I cannot live without you—without the sweet comfort of your presence; you are to me what the water is to the parched traveller in the desert.” Here he threw her hands away—sprung up—drawing his lissom lengthy form from the soft rug and standing upright before her, he went on: “I love you like this—love you till I have grown mad—love you so that *I cannot take myself away*; and yet I have some sense left, for I tell you it is better for you to go—to have no more to say to me. And—if—you—will—I will—let you—before—Marie, Marie, save yourself and leave me.” The last words were very low—very earnest—his hands were clenched together as he stooped over her.

She raised her sweet face and stretched up her little hands with a low, pathetic cry—

“Never, never, never; I can bear all with you; will comfort and cheer you, with God’s help make you a better man; but, Denzil, I cannot leave you.”

He took the little hands and drew her up

to him, folded her in his strong arms as he had done under the shade of the beech trees—his face was as white and as passion-tossed as it had been then as he murmured—

“Kismet, so be it.”

Big tears rolled down her cheek as she lay cradled on his breast with his proud, dark head leaning lovingly on the golden waves of her hair, which caught the light of the young moon peeping its round yellow face over the beeches, throwing its glamouring light in a great white flood on their joyful sorrow.

Next day they were married.

## CHAPTER IV.

### HONEYMOONING.

DOWN the Rhine, floating on the bosom of the classic river, went the newly-married pair. Every mile they traversed was a fresh wonder and delight to the convent-bred girl, whose experience of life and even Nature's beauties had hitherto been of a very circumscribed nature—the convent and Rendelsholme.

Her devouring eyes wandered ceaselessly from side to side, drinking in the beauties of Nature. There was strange soothing in the calm majesty of that mighty river as it rolled on swift and silent between those lovely hills and castellated crags, each of which was as a sweet poem, telling its own story to her listening ear. She was entranced with what she saw, and Denzil too seemed calmed by gentle mother Nature; every hour that sped lifted a wrinkle of trouble from his brow. Marie had never seen him so calm, so easily pleased, or so happy. He was devoted to her.

and she expanded under his tender care and love. In her wildest dreams she had not hoped that earth held such happiness as this. His wild despair lay buried. His restlessness slept. He laid himself out to please her ; watching her hushed awe, or glad smiling surprise, as some fresh unexpected beauty came in view, seemed happiness to him, enhanced a thousand-fold when a little hand would steal into his, and his wife's soft eyes would lovingly seek and find in his the sympathy she needed ere she could fully enjoy the lovely scene.

Everything was fresh and beautiful, and Marie enjoyed it like a little child. Her husband let her wander at will, they had no settled plan, so she could go where she would ; and, like the busy bee, she never tired of the garden of Nature, but flew from flower to flower, sucking up sweet knowledge everywhere. He was happy in her happiness, and she was as happy as the days were long.

On they strayed, here, there, everywhere, revelling in their happiness. Towns were visited, their wonders seen ; but the fair cathedral at Cologne, and the more imposing

one at Strasburg, awed more than they pleased her ; she felt oppressed, almost frightened at their stately grandeur. She grew silent and pale in the towns ; they smothered her, she said ; so they gladly left the cities, only visiting them at interludes, and dwelt on the lake shore, lapped in the happy sunshine, or sought the cool breezes of the high hill sides ; wandering up, up, up, till they came to the confines where summer and winter met, and disputed as to who should hold the ground.

Their feet wandered through enchanted plains, where whole fields of "catholic" forget-me-nots raised their blue eyes to heaven in mute entreaty, while the bluer heavens smiled back soft answers to their turquoise depths. Golden buttercups, starry dandelion, bespangled the green sward with their golden glitter, while the purple gentian bloomed under the sheltering canopy of the overhanging snow, which sheltered with its crystal roof, while it watered with its tepid drops the opening cups of that lovely purple flower which bursts from mother earth even when encircled with winter's snowy sheet.

“Who would stay, oppressed with the weight of man’s ingenuity in towns, when they can see wonders such as these fresh from God’s own hand on this fair mountain side?” exclaimed Marie, as she fairly sighed with delight at the wonders of Nature. “Oh! if I had but wings to reach one of those distant snow-peaks, towering into the clouds, surely I would be nearer Heaven there!”

“Not one bit, little one, and I won’t hear of your wanting wings to fly away from me. Be content.”

“Content, yes, and dearest, this is such sweet content. I did not know I could be so happy.”

There were tears in her eyes as she spoke, and she looked far away—away, where the tender mist was flaunting a thin veil, coqueting with Nature; now dropping, now withdrawing it from the peaceful valley, where lay the smiling village and the mirrored lake, bathed in golden sunlight. Above and beyond the circling mist towered the great Alps, sparkling in their glittering sheen, bedecked with myriads of jewels that flashed and scintillated as they caught the red rays of the



evening sun. Immediately under her feet lay the garden of flowers.

It was too beautiful to last, and swift came the change o'er the scene. The red rays of the sun on the glistening snow intensified—changed rapidly to crimson—purple—died, and left a cold white monster looming overhead. Gasping with astonishment at this sudden transformation, you looked to the valley, and there the parting laugh of the sun is hid by the envious veil of the floating mist, supplemented by the black pall of the coming night that threw its mantle over all, and left the watchers shrouded in sudden night, awed on the lone mountain side.

“Well, little one, are you satisfied,” asked Denzil, as he put his arm tenderly round his little wife, “after a transformation scene like this.”

“It is too beautiful. I could not have imagined anything like it.” Then, nestling close to him, “How good you are to me. There is something very solemn in this dim light, with the black valley at our feet, and the huge mountains overhead; one feels so insignificant—almost tempted to call on the

mountains to cover them and hide them from the eye of God."

"Hush, darling! It has been too much for you; I am afraid you are tired. I cannot bear to hear you talk like this. It makes me feel as if my wife was an unearthly fay, or some heaven-born sprite, only lent me for a moment. I am afraid you may suddenly develop those wings you were wishing for, and fly away—go to more congenial spheres and leave me—alone."

His voice was very tender, and he held her very close. She nestled closer still, and felt the sweet comfort of being thus supported. She drew a long breath as she rested, secure in her husband's love, encircled by his strong arm, and wafted a prayer to the Author of all Good that it might ever be so; that no power might come between, no force ever separate her from the sweet shelter of her husband's love. She was contented to rest with him on earth, and felt no need of angel wings to bear her to other scenes of bliss than this. Then, away to the cool depths of the Black Forest the happy pair wandered, and rested beneath its lordly shade. There

they lost themselves, and to the world grew lost in the mighty depths of that great world of wood. There their spirits were stirred to the innermost core with awe-struck delight, as they drank in the solemn, still beauty of Nature's huge cathedral. Stand where they would, on either side the delicate pillared aisles, stretched as far as the eye could reach, then grew lost in the limitless distance; while above, the green Gothic arches pierced skyward, their elegant tracery lost in the blue mist of airy space.

Together in the great forest! A great calm fell on the heart of each. Of all their glad two months, of all their happy travels that week was the time of most perfect peace. Ever after—even when sorrow and dark trouble shadowed their path—the memory of that week lay cherished, green and fresh, gravened on the heart of both. A picture of love, peace, rest.

Perhaps this was because it was the closing chapter of their halcyon days; for, when they visited earth again, came out from dreamland and the fairy forest, they found themselves in the gloaming of a mellow October evening,

gazing at the laughing, dashing, splashing foam of the great falls of Schaffhausen, with the babble and laughter of a hundred tongues mingling with the deafening roar of the Rhine waters. Here with a troubled sigh Denzil declared their holiday was over. Time was up. Duty called him—he must join his regiment.

“Horrid regiment,” pouted Marie; “how I wish the war was over, then you could leave it, and we could live like this for ever.”

“Days like these, love, are too sweet to last; we might grow tired of them—children sicken of lolly-pops!”

“Oh! Denzil, how can you?—but of course, love, I know you are right; in our happiness we must not forget that there are duties in life—duties that are very distasteful just now, I own, for our lives are *so* delicious!”

Not another word of remonstrance or dissatisfaction did she utter, as speedily they made their way to Cork, where the —th were quartered.

High up on the hill, above the Glanmire road, with a full view of the river, and the

beautiful harbour, Captain Devereux had secured a house for his wife.

Fresh from Continental scenery, she still found soft beauties here to please her eye and gladden her heart. The mists and the showers, the sun blaze and shade, threw a seductive glamour over hill and dale, over steep crags and soft verdure, over mighty heaving river and distant restless ocean, which was bounded by peaked mountains whose smooth sides slid gently down into deep water, or broke off abruptly, and plunged headlong from sheer two hundred feet of serried cliff into fathomless depths of leaping foam.

Marie was charmed with the scenery of her new home. She declared there was a bright life and vitality about it that invigorated her like strong wine.

But, alas! with the duties of life Denzil's restless harrassed manner returned. He was no more the tender husband of those happy two months—he was again the irritable wayward Denzil of the past. He tried her patience greatly, and though unhappy at his absence, she rejoiced when a long day's hunting kept him for hours in the saddle and

brought him in a wearied man after his day's exertion—a wearied man who would let her sing him to sleep, and who even in that sleep would moan and groan, and toss, and then start up and hurriedly leave the room, or call out for her to come to him, to talk to him, to assure him of her bodily presence, and continued love for himself. He also insisted on going much into society. He was proud of his wife, of the admiration and attention she received. In the high phaeton she would drive to the covert seated by his side, and there be surrounded by admirers. There was much visiting and visitors. At first Marie was amused, then grew fairly bewildered with her surroundings; as in all the vast moving throng, she felt she stood all alone. Alone, because the husband she loved so dearly she by no means understood; her true loyal woman's heart would hardly allow even to herself that it was so, that she did not understand him; that his ways and his habits were an enigma which sorely distressed and puzzled her; but, unfortunately, it was so.

One acquaintance was a great comfort

and became a friend to her—Miss Stuart-Moore, Lady Brock's niece, who lived in the neighbourhood of Cork, and gladly renewed her acquaintance with Mrs. Devereux. She was a gay happy girl full of life—Irish life—and fun, and often carried Mrs. Devereux off with her, whether she would or not, to some scene of pleasure or amusement, declaring it was good for her, and if she did not come, she would grow a stupid mope, and Captain Devereux would grow sick of her.

“Seriously, Mrs. Devereux, you are not half so cheerful or bright as you used to be; you know you are a stranger here, and of course Captain Devereux has to be away—gentlemen always have ‘things’—mysterious businesses—to do; so they say. But I know half their time they are smoking in the Club, nodding over *Bell's Life*, or deeply engrossed with their billiards. And I also know, dear Mrs. Devereux, that they do not like to find their wives dull when they come home. That is a silent reproach that stings them to the quick. For their conscience tells them, *they ought* to look to their wives. But, they won't do it a bit the more for that—not they! it is

not their way, poor pets! we spoil them. But though we spoil, we must not let them learn to hate us. It is our *rôle* to be merry and wise, to receive them always with open arms, and smiling faces when they do come; to persuade them we are the happiest wives under the sun, no matter what we really may suffer from their unconscionable vagaries—or what silly way they choose to amuse themselves—” she stopped breathless, and Mrs. Devereux smiling, broke in—

“Your picture of the neglected wife, and the careless husband is most forcible; but *I* am not neglected, neither is my husband careless. Do you really think I am not as bright as I used to be?” asked she, anxiously.

“You certainly are not.”

“I am not very strong. I hope my husband does not perceive it—it would make him quite wretched!” said Mrs. Devereux, with serious concern.

“The way to ensure his not perceiving it is not to allow it to exist. Come, Mrs. Devereux, put yourself in my hands, and I will make you the brightest, as you are already the sweetest, wife in Munster.”



So entreated, Marie yielded, and spent a good part of her time with Miss Stuart-Moore, visiting, driving and riding in her society.

The more Mrs. Devereux knew Miss Stuart-Moore the better she liked that young lady; who under a brusque somewhat hoydenish manner, had strong common sense and a kind feeling heart—which heart was at present full of her new friend—jealous for her—and not altogether in love with her husband's treatment of her.

## CHAPTER V.

### HEARTACHES.

THE weeks sped on rapidly, and as they flew, the transient Arcadian peace and bliss that had been Marie's portion in the first decade of her married life vanished.

The poor child wearied her brain in the vain endeavour to discover the why and the wherefore of this, but without success.

There was no actual coolness, no neglect, no quarrel between her and her husband, no tangible fact to complain of. But she felt there was some subtle influence ; some unseen shadow, which, like the deadly poison of the upas tree, withered the flower, dried the sap, and destroyed the very seeds of their happiness.

For it was not she alone who suffered ; Denzil looked miserable. He was much from home, on duty, he said ; though at times he admitted with impatient bitterness that he had been fagging after pleasure ! Judging

by his worn appearance a pretty severe fagging it was, for he grew gaunt and hollow-cheeked, sullen eyes, and bitter of speech. In the first days of his marriage he had been like the man in Scripture, who had for a time banished the devil. Now it was as if the seven devils had come back to him, and verily "the last state of the man was worse than the first."

As for Marie her "crown of sorrows" was that she had *hoped for*, not remembered, "better things."

Outwardly they were "enjoying themselves," taking a prominent part in the amusements of the season. No dinner was "select," no ball a "complete success" that did not count the Devereux amongst the guests; while at the covert-side, or the three days' battue, their presence was equally desired.

Gentle patient Marie had often some difficulty in getting her erratic husband to remember hours, and to be in proper time for these various engagements.

"Denzil, dear, remember we dine at Colonel Frenche's to-night; try and be in

time," or "Please, dearest, recollect we go to Barymore this evening ; it is a long drive, and they dine at seven," were daily and necessary reminders. So that "Try to be early this afternoon, Denzil ; Moores Court is a long way, and we ought to start in good time," was only one of her usual hints, that did not call for or hardly prepared her for what followed.

"Whew !" a long whistle. "What a bore, I quite forgot all about it." Then hesitating, "I think, truth is I have got another engagement ; you must go without me."

"Oh ! Denzil, no. I never *could* do that. How could you forget ? The Duhallows meet there to-morrow, we are engaged to stay till Thursday. Miss Stuart-Moore was here yesterday and asked me to come early, that I might rest before dressing ; there is to be a large dinner party this evening. It would never do to disappoint them, sending an apology at the last moment."

"Beastly stupid of me ! Of course I know that," said he, impatiently. "Horrid nuisance, too, for it is about the best country we have, and I hate to miss a good run, but

what can I do? I have business that *must* be attended to; you go and make an apology for me."

"Please do not ask me—I have never been anywhere without you, dear. If you cannot go I would much rather stay at home."

There were tears in her voice as she spoke. Not that she cared to go, but she was nervous; hurt at her husband's manner. He had been rude and abrupt, and had left her much alone for the last few weeks. Now he seemed almost angry with her for saying it would be rude not to fulfil his engagement to Moores Court, a visit that he had been quite anxious about a week ago; and which she could hardly think he had forgotten as completely as he pretended, and seemed to wish her to believe.

"It is very awkward—very awkward indeed. We might manage this way, if you will be contented," he did not look at her as he spoke, but gazed out of the window. "I could drive over and dine there, but I must return to town to-night, my business is for to-morrow. You can stay on until Thursday."

“I would much rather come back with you, darling.”

“Nonsense! I shall have to be off at break of day to-morrow, probably not return to-morrow night. Much better for you to remain at Moores Court than return to mope alone here.” Then in a kinder tone he went on—“Really, love, now that I think of it, this dinner at Moores Court is very lucky; I shall feel happier leaving you in the safe keeping of your friend than by yourself. Stuart-Moore will excuse me when I leave him such a little treasure as you are. Eh! darling?” He drew her towards him caressingly.

She was only half content. Not happy. What was his mysterious business? Where was he going? Why did he not tell her? And, she did not like the idea of being left with strangers without the support and comfort of his presence. She nestled close to him. The sweet blue eyes, liquid with unshed tears, looked fondly into his dark ones—dark eyes, vexed and sad, that scarce cared to meet her own, and that continually avoided the unspoken enquiry of her anxious gaze.

She did not speak, she rested on his breast. His will was her law ; and she tried to feel contented. . But, the loving tender heart longed for closer communion—fuller and more congenial sympathy.

She was weak and weary, starved for love—full, soul-satisfying assurance of which had for weeks past been withheld from her.

She was not actually unhappy, for she did not doubt that he loved her, but she feared that *love* was only a small part of the requirement of his nature, and that, though she had his love, she was unable to fill the many needs and various moods of his strong nature. What was she to do ?

She was disappointed. But her disappointment was with herself, not with him. She was not to him what she had hoped to be ; she had failed to fill the voids, to satisfy the cravings and the wants of his nature ?

Dear, loving heart ! With keen pain her sensitive soul recognised the fact that there were recesses in her husband's heart carefully concealed from her inspection. And alas ! from day to day she was conscious that this veil of reserve was thickening, and the spaces

concealed increasing. She was not growing *into*, but *out of* her husband's confidence. She trembled to think the time might come when only the "state chamber" of the love he *professed*—yes, thank God, still often and vehemently professed—would be open to her.

She was but a girl-wife; childishly diffident of her own powers, with unbounded faith in his. Innocent of the claim her sacred position of wifehood conferred upon her, she hesitated, and feared to attempt to penetrate the reserve that he chose to practise towards her. Her whole being was absorbed with him and his needs, her whole ambition was to minister to and conduce to his well-being. She would fain be content with what he gave, and bow her spirit to his will. And still it was hard to be satisfied. In the earlier days of her marriage she had been given glimpses of richer ore, veining the soul of her husband, of high ambitions and noble aspirations. In these she had taken great delight.

Peeping into the leaves of the unknown book of her husband's mind had been a source of exquisite enjoyment. Each leaf



disclosed a fresh beauty. She revelled in the discoveries she made, and now—the leaves stuck together—refused to be turned over—lay an unreadable mine, cased in the rich covers of his love ; which, with lock and key, seemed slowly, but surely to be closing, locking up the secrets of his inner man, for ever.

She was a disappointed child. The book was still hers ; there it lay, close at hand ; gorgeous in its outside beauty ; an almost useless treasure.

Still, what could she do ? It was not he ; it was not she who had ruthlessly closed this book ?

She lay on his breast silent. Making no reply to his “ eh ! darling ! ” unless the mute appeal of her loving eyes may count as such, from which his sad eyes looked away pained. Then the tears she would not have him see welled up in her, the soft lids closed over them, and she lay very still.

How exquisitely lovely, though white, thin, and transparent, the child’s face looked as she lay there on her husband’s breast. The spirit beauty of her countenance was very

touching—so he thought as he looked down on her. Ah ! if she could only see him now. See the tenderness with which he is regarding her, and the pitiful trouble that is in his sad face. His eyes are full of love, horrible doubt, and an agony of dread remorse. He does not speak one word ; for he can say nothing that would comfort this pale suffering child who lies so still and patient against his heart ; craving, he knows, for the confidence he cannot give.

It is a fearful hydra-headed monster that seems to shadow them both, and judging from their faces, as silent they stand together there, *his* is the heaviest burden to bear.

She is pale, sad, but peaceful still. He looks as if torn on the rack. He does not tighten his arm with loving pressure round her waist ; he just lets her lie still. But look in his face, and you will see it is with difficulty he does so. He is putting a great constraint on himself. He will not let her see the trouble he is in ; he will not give way to the almost overpowering desire that possesses him.

Oh! God, oh! God, how long can he bear it? As long as she is still—no longer..

A trembling sigh, half sob, escapes her.. She puts her little trembling hand on his, and presses it tenderly, mutely appealing for something more than the cold support he is giving her. She feels the heart she rests on bound fiercely; she can hear it throb. Then the strong arms fold round her convulsively, and with a great cry the agony of the man's heart brims over—

“My love! my love! my poor bruised little dove. God help us both! and forgive me the great misery I have brought into your life.”

He kisses her softly, tenderly, reverently, on hair, on brow and lips, and moans—

“Oh! child, child, can you ever forgive me? I hate myself when I think the curse I am to you.”

With shy tenderness she presses her lips to his, and with a voice trembling with conflicting emotions, she whispers—

“My husband—my own love. You are my greatest blessing. What have I to forgive?”

“The curse of being linked to such as I,” burst from him. Then he went on, wildly, “Oh! my God, forgive me. I cannot undo what I have done. Thou knowest I cannot do without her. Have pity—have pity on this poor lamb. Save her from this horrible sacrifice.”

“Hush! hush! love,” she cried. “There is no sacrifice. I would not change places with the Queen. I would not have it otherwise. Am I not your wife? You love me, and for the rest we must be content with the happiness God gives us.”

“Precious comforter! sweet flower!” he went on. “You know not what you are saying. My love has done you cruel wrong. I loved you so, I could not help myself. I curse the day that I was born when I remember that I, who love you better than my own soul, have brought this cruel blight on your fair young life. My wild love is the shadow that dims the glory of your pure existence. I had no right ever to join my fate with yours. I am not worthy to touch the hem of your garment. What worth have I to deserve your sweet love? What right

to take your precious kisses? Marie, child, I wish you were not so sweet, so pure, so good; then, perhaps, I would not feel quite so great a villain."

"Don't talk folly, love. If you were other than you are, perhaps I would not love you as I do; and if I was different, you would not care for me as I know you do now. Oh! my own love, I would in no wise have it different. The great happiness of my life is—I'm your wife. That blessed fact, and the feeling that you love me, is all that I need to enable me to bear the minor ills and trials of our life—trials, love," here she sighed, "that I have no doubt are as much, nay more, my fault than yours, and which I feel sure God in His own time will clear away from our path, if only we have patience with each other, and love, love each other in spite of our faults and shortcomings."

"Precious child! Would that I could think so; but I do not see when or how this trouble is to end."

Then he lifted her up from her resting-place on his heart, and went on slowly and sadly, the great black eyes looking on her

with a yearning pity, and his words coming with a great and bitter cry as he held her facing him—

“Love! love! you believe me that I love you better than my peace on earth, or my hopes of heaven—that I have always loved you—been driven mad, and my powers of reason upset for the love of you? You believe this?”

He saw the affirmative answer in her sweet eyes; then went on, catching his breath as he did so—

“And no matter what comes—what happens—to make you hate—yes, hate me—you will believe that now—in all the past, and in all the time to come—I love you with all the strength and all the power of my mad and miserable soul. God help me! that my love should so hurt the one woman there is in this world for me.”

He let her go; let her drop away from him, for she was so overcome she could scarcely stand, and staggered as she lost the support of his sustaining hands. What did it all mean? Was he mad? He turned from her and threw himself, face downward, on the sofa.

Then, with all her woman's love in her eyes, and her wife's tenderness on her lips, she knelt beside him.

"My own! my own! whatever comes, my own, nothing—nothing—could make me hate you. Are you not part of myself? Remember, love, we are one flesh. As long as there is life in this poor body I must love you, cherish you, help to make you think better of yourself, and comfort you. Don't you know you are my all? I have neither father, mother, brother or sister; all the love I have, that might have been divided with these, is concentrated on you, on my husband. Precious word—husband—precious tie."

Her lips lingered lovingly on the words, and she laid her cheek by his as she went on—

"I am only a weak child-woman, I know—but when I repeat to myself that word husband, I grow strong, and I know with my husband by my side I will be given strength to bear whatever trouble, grief, or sin God sees fit to send into my life. Don't fret for me, my love; I am stronger than you think. I only ask to share the burden of my husband's trouble. What is it?"

Here she paused. She could see him shudder as he lay prone, crouching on the couch—shrinking from her little hand that sought to steal round his neck, but could not, as he lay face downward, grovelling on the pillows. She waited a moment ; he did not speak, but he shivered from head to foot—shivered like a man in the ague throughout the whole length and breadth of his massive stalwart frame ; and, as she gently stroked his head, she saw white threads shining amongst the raven of his hair. Then, in her low sweet voice, she went on—

“ If my husband does not wish to tell me, I do not wish to know. I can trust him—but oh ! I feel it would be better for—better for him—better for me—that there lay no mystery between us.”

She still pressed her soft cheek to his, and felt the restless quiver vibrating through his frame. But he did not speak, and she had no more to say.

Presently he grew still—calmer—and turning himself, he drew her close and kissed her sadly—sadly and gently—

“ You are an angel ! I do not deserve



your trust any more than your sweet and precious love. Nevertheless, I must ask you to trust me still. And, love, we must live our life now as it lies before us. It is too late, too late to make it other than it is. You will have patience with me, love? Do as I ask. Forgive me all my waywardness, restlessness, and cold cruelty, for sometimes, love, the pain of being with you is more than I can bear."

He spoke sadly, wearily, as a man worn out with contending against some superior force, and who yielded only because human nature could no longer hold out against the opposing power.

"My darling, I will do whatever you wish, if you will only try to be happy," answered his wife, like a true woman, forgetting her own troubles the moment she saw the depth of his—his need of comfort in his grief.

How worn he had grown in the last few weeks; how thin he looked. Her heart ached for him.

He lay there a little space—silent—his arm round her, she mutely caressing him. Then he rose up. Not with the elasticity of

youth, or the vigorous movement one would expect from his well knit, active frame, but like one who had been sick for weeks. He moved slowly, inertly, as if his being was a burden greater than he could bear. Then he said, gently—

“Darling, I will be back in good time. We will dine at Moores Court, as I said. You will remain there, and I—I will do what I must.”

She offered no further remonstrance, but uttered a quiet, steady—

“Yes.”

Then she kissed him and he went away.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A CLUE.

AWAY he went. Every step that took him further from his wife seemed to infuse more energy, more life, more fierce determination into his movements ; and it was with hurried, impatient strides he finally reached the barracks—sought and obtained the “leave” he required for his two days’ intended absence.

Then he strode hurriedly down the hill, reached Patrick’s Bridge, crossed it, and threw furtive glances all around. There was no one near that he knew. He turned short to the left along the quay, waded through alluvial mud and antediluvian accumulations of all manner of *débris* and mud, plunged recklessly down dark alleys, wound in and out—wandering on, on, on, through the labyrinthian intricacies of the back slums, scanning anxiously each coasting vessel, each fishing smack, and almost every sea-tanned face he met.

Peering curiously in through dark doorways, inspecting the motley crew that lounged in the entries—the drunken loafers who reeled in and out of the low public-houses—in his anxiety even entering some of these reeking holes, searching impatiently, making his exit more quickly than his entry ; for, amongst all that seething, reeking, squabbling, drunken squallor what he needed was not to be found.

Many looked up as the gentleman passed, but few took more than a cursory inspection ; they were too besotted with drink, or too busy. One tawdry slattern, who had once been a pretty girl, now a thing of loathsome disgust, seized a bundle of rags from the kennel and followed him, begging—thrusting her filthy hands and filthier fœtid offspring into his face—begging. She was not deterred by the look of shuddering disgust he cast on her, but persisted, poking her unkempt head and leering lips in unwelcome proximity to his own. With his hand he waved her off—then the strings of her tongue were loosed, and a volley of sin's own vocabulary hurled at him. Poor wretch !

and she was a woman, young, good-looking despite of her squalid misery and sin, once innocent. Could she be of the same sex—flesh and blood—as the girl he had left waiting for him at home? Her horrid curses, profane and obscene epithets, made his blood run cold as he hurried on. Her shrill voice rang in his ear long after he had shaken her off.

What brought him here? What possible business or pleasure could Captain Devereux have in this uncongenial sphere? Did he need to study human nature and physiognomy amongst the great unwashed? Was he bent on discovering the hidden mystery of how the sweltering seething mass of writhing humanity exists in the back slums and purlieus of the wharf? Has he any wish to see how the wretched, fallen, and corrupt herd together, till all of the *man's* nature is lost, and only beast instincts remain, their sins and their miseries fermenting together, till they exude and poison the very air with the noisome miasma of their uniform decay and utter rottenness? Alas! no, it is none of these; he is blind to the sights that surround him—blind to the

comedy, blind to the tragedy; blind to the sin. Deaf also. He hears none of the curses, the coarse jests, or the obscene words that are bandied around him.

Yet he goes in and out, in and out, through the bustling throng, looking intently for what he never sees, listening anxiously for the sound that is not there for him to hear.

A shove is given him on one side, with a civil "Beg your honour's pardon," on the other, with a low muttered curse. He is an object of derision to a group of ragged urchins, who, grimy, half-fed, and worse clad, are increasing the circulation in their bare feet by industriously scraping them through the slimy gutter till the semi-liquid mud is piled high; then, watching their opportunity till some better clothed being than themselves passes, they jump mischievously into the centre, and splash them right royally with the filthy muck, regardless alike of the additional abominations they are adding to their own tatterdemalion suits, and the curses, sometimes blows, that they call on their own heads. Others of this happy band are enjoying themselves, planted, head down-

wards, on the cleanest flag they can find, their dirty heels resting against the wall, patiently waiting till an unwary passer-by gives them an opportunity to flourish them downwards in unpleasant proximity to the passer-by's face. Then the impudent urchin wriggles and runs away before the irate pedestrian can seize and make the delinquent amenable for the offence.

"Lord, look at the swell!" cried one of this ragged regiment, attracted by Captain Devereux's appearance.

"Yerra! what the devil does he want?" cried another.

"Oh, glory! Look at tin-and-six down amongst the ha'-pence—he's a lookin' for something."

"What?"

"Ah! houl't yer blather—the jintleman is lookin' for a walett (valet), I tell ye."

"P'rhaps he wants a he-pe-po-tamus; there is no knowing what vagaries the quality are after these times."

"Devil mend ye! will ye hold yer tongue. This is an out and outer—a rale prancer;

he's after something, or he would not be spying round here."

"He's an inspectir, then."

"Divil a bit—he's none of yer half sirs, but a rale jintlemin—sure, I know them when I see them. Faix, I'll be after askin' him what he wants."

"Be aisey! sure, it's lookin' at the boats he is. Maybe he's going for sail."

"Be dad! p'rhaps he's goin' to swim. Thade Mullane swam to the Black Castle and back last week for a fiver—maybe he's goin' to thry and bate *that*."

"May the divil fly away with him if he is. It is hard lines takin' the honest money out of a poor man's pocket. And there's no accounting for tastes. Why, it's only last week Major Black ran every step of the road to Mallow in three hours and twenty minutes, to bate Patsey Donegan, who had rin the road in three thirty."

"Blast him, the naigger!"

"Yah! its mane—better far if he had given the shiners to Mickey Spalpeen (small boy); he'd have done the trick in the same



time, or less, and saved the jintlemin's shoe leather."

"No he wouldn't," cried one small boy.

"I tell you he would," insisted the first.

"Divil a bit," laughed the contradictor.

"Damn your eyes, what do you know about it, you ignorant son of a sea horse," retorted the bigger boy.

"Tare and ages! what do *you* know?" contemptuously cried the small boy, "you great big, ugly, hulking potato face. We all know you could not run from here to Pathtrick's Bridge to save yer own mother from hanging."

"Dare to say that agin, ye devil's spawn of a monkey face, and I'll black yer eyes for ye."

"Hist—hist, be aisey, boys; there's a bobby comin' down the road," warned an elder boy; "and, by jabbers, here's the dainty swell coming this way. Faith, I'll ask him to tip us a tizzy."

With this the young urchin threw a somersault that landed him under Captain Devereux's nose, and, holding out a grimy hand from which the tatters fell in graceful fringes, he whined—

"Plase, yer honour, a tizzy."

"Or a ha'-penny to buy bread," yelled No. 2.

"Or a sixpence for the mother that's lyin' at home down with the faver," cried No. 3.

"Oh, kind jintlemin, a trifle for the poor woman that's lain in with the twins. Father's in the hospital these six weeks, and divil a bit or a sup we have in the house at home," chorused a fourth.

"Mother is lyin' dead, and we haven't the price of a coffin to bury her," whimpered a fifth.

"Ah! gentleman dear, give me a little help!" finished up with a snivel the sixth of these inventive geniuses, each trying to outvie his predecessor in the affecting tale of his petition. "Father is dead, mother is wake with hunger, and Billy and Molly is down with the faver."

The whole band were really in want, but not one of the begging petitions that fell so glibly from their voluble tongues contained a word of truth—they were fanciful sketches invented on the moment.

"Whist! be aisey; ye'r annoying the jin-

tleman. Don't ye see he's in throuble," went on the elder. "Is there anything I can be afther doin' for yer honour."

"Is it a messenger ye want—if so, I'm yer man," went on No. 2.

"Oh! Holy Mother! it's in love he is," cried No. 3, winking at his companions. "Don't ye see he has no ears to hear our entreaties. Capthain, dear—Colonel—if it will aise ye'r mind at all, sure I'm the boy will run a message for ye to the young lady."

This lively sally was met with a chorus of shouts, and the young monkeys jostled and shouldered one another as they looked up in Captain Devereux's set face, who, baffled and disappointed, was making his way back to civilised regions. At last their importunities attracted the Captain's attention.

"Get out of the way you little rascals," was his first adjuration, then, stopping short, he singled out one, the sharpest and the dirtiest-looking of the gang—

"Here, you—can you tell me has Pat Sullivan been about here lately?"

"Sullivan—Pat Sullivan," echoed the ragged urchin, a stolid, stupid, know-

nothing look setting down on his hitherto alert countenance; "there is many Sullivan's about. Which of them does yer honour mane?"

"Sullivan from the Black Head," said the Captain, shortly; "do you know him?"

"Patsay," said the boy, turning to a friend, "I wonder would it be Rossa the jintlemin is after wantin'?"

"Sure, it's myself don't know. The jintlemin hasn't done me the honour to spake to me," answered incorrigible No. 2.

"Eh! ye little divil, can't ye keep a civil tongue in yer head," remonstrated No. 1.

"Civil tongue yerself, ye nigger," cried No. 2.

A stinging box on the ear from No. 1 silenced this impudent tongue; then the master of the situation turned to Captain Devereux, looked at him vaguely, scratched his uncombed head, hitched up the nondescript garments that disguised, for they did not cover, the nakedness, dirt, or emaciation of his lower extremities, and spoke slowly, sapiently remarking—

"Sullivans are as plinty as blackberries all

over the counthry ; if you'd be afther tillin' me where the man yer honour wants belongs to, I might know ; there are Rossas and Dhues as many as I has fingers and toes."

"He used to hang out about Kinsale, at the Black Head," answered the Captain, impatiently ; and the hot blood surged to his temples as he spoke.

"Ugh ! I'm afther knowing now who ye manes—Patsey Rua, the Hoveller. *I* don't know anything about *him* ; but *I* knows a feller who might."

With that he doubled up his finger, put it between his lips, and sent a shrill whistle, sharp, quick ; one, two, three times vibrating down the quay.

Ere he had well finished his signal, a lithe lad, some fifteen or sixteen years of age, lounged forward, apparently emerging from an empty cask that lay at a little distance.

The new comer was a well-made, handsome lad, with clear olive skin and black eyes ; evidently one of the descendants of the ill-fated Spanish Armada, whose progeny are easily distinguished amongst the peasants in the south and west of Ireland to this

day. The boy's handsome limbs were as little covered as decency permitted. A coarse flannel shirt, homespun and once white, and drawers of the same, reaching midway down the calf of his leg, with paputs on his feet (paputs are cow-hide shoes, modelled from the hot skin, tied on with thongs of the same; a common protection to the feet, manufactured and worn by the coast fishermen in the south and west of Ireland), was all the covering he wore, unless we count the thick thatch that Nature had placed above his broad, intelligent brow as part of his costume.

He sauntered up to the street Arab who had summoned him with careless grace and stood confronting him. They were a striking pair. The beauty and grace of the one half naked, Nature's gentleman; the equal nakedness, cunning, and dirt of the other gutter-born brat, who shivered in the raw winter fog, with his fringe of filthy tatters fluttering round his gleaming limbs, little more covered from the elements than is the wild African savage, who finds his courtly costume of cows' tails, or fringe of rattling tusks too

great an encumbrance in the heat of his more congenial climate.

The new-comer questioned—

“Well, Jim, what’s afloat?”

“This here swell cove,” the imp nodded patronisingly in the direction of the Captain, “says he’s a wantin’ Patsey Rua. Oh! my eye, what a lark!”

The creature danced a jig step while he put his fingers to his nose.

The new-comer looked leisurely at Captain Devereux, measured him from head to foot with an appreciative glance. Suddenly his eye showed a gleam of comprehension. Then, with lazy unconcern, he muttered—

“Wantin’ to see Rua? that’s quare.”

“Queer or not, I want him. Where is he? tell me, if you know,” asked the Captain, impatiently.

“Rua is not here. It is not for me to say where he is.”

“Then you don’t know?—there is no good in my waiting. I suppose nobody can tell me?”

And the Captain moved on impatiently.

“Oh! yer honour—a tizzy, a tizzy—sure

an' I done my best for you," urged Pautheen, dancing a war dance round him. "Ye'r not going to lave us widout sumtin to remimber ye by?"

"Oh, no, his honour would niver do the like of that," chorused the other members of the ragged fraternity.

The Captain, thus reminded, put his hand in his pocket and showered some small coins of the realm amongst them, upon which they pounced with a wild cheer, and let him pursue his way in peace, but not alone. Quietly by his side, unremarked at first, moved the fisher lad, who had been summoned by the little street Arab.

The lad was eyeing the gentleman out of his sharp black eyes meditatively. Presently he spoke—

"Would yer honour be afther remimbering the night ye were out 'haking' wid Murt Oge?"

The Captain started, looked curiously at his attendant; then pausing, while the red blood rose in his pale face, said quietly—

"I do not remember you."



"Like enough; but I was there. I saw ye—ye came aboard with Rua."

Again the Captain walked—slowly this time—while he asked—

"Well, what if you did. That won't tell me what I want to know. Where is Rua now?"

The other went on unheeding the last remark—

"I seed ye often; ye wur a dale about the Head last year. The night Murt's boat was lost on the Daunt's Rock you did not come with us, lucky for yez. Murt expected you would come; I heard Rua explain as how the Colleen Dhas would not let ye out."

Here he looked fixedly at his companion.

The Captain's face was set and very white. Now he stopped and faced round.

"I don't know who you are; but you seem to know a good deal about me. Can you, or can you not tell me where to find Rua? I'd swear he spoke to me near here not three weeks since. I have looked for him high and low ever since, and I cannot find him."

"Belikes, no. The beaks is afther he, and he's ahide."

"Oh! that's it, is it? What's wrong?"

"He's in throuble. The Cornish men came in; they'd a fight—the Sullivans and the Derricks."

"What! Black Derrick!" cried the Captain now fairly roused.

"Lor, no! He's at the bottom of the say, blast him! so he is; leastways they say so."

"Who then, or what Derricks?" eagerly demanded the Captain. "Why did they fight?"

"Sullivan said there was no fair play about the Colleen Dhas"—here the Captain looked deadly white—"The Derricks denied it, and called her ugly names."

"Well—"

"The parish riz up; heads were broke, and Patsey killed his man."

"Killed him outright?"

"It was a fair fight. He was kilt only, but he died in the hospital since; it's an ugly job—hanging they siz."

"And Sullivan is still at large?"

"He's ahide, along wid de saygulls maybe. The earth is stopped, and the old fox is apt

to lie near home. I tell yez because ye are a frind of his. I heard tell ye'd help him if ye could."

"I help him! How?" incredulously exclaimed the Captain.

"That's not for me to say; but when Rua was on the run he tould me 'twould be as much as his life was worth if he could see the English gentleman. He thried to find yiz."

"Aye! I met him on Patrick's Bridge not three weeks ago. It was a dark night. He passed, then he recognised, turned and spoke to me. It was only one word, for when I stopped and faced round, the police patrol came up, and the man darted off like a rocket."

"Like enough," the boy nodded. "He's no 'flat' to be caught nappin'."

"I followed him to the quays, and lost him somewhere hereabouts."

"Just so. He had to run."

"Well, where can I find him?"

Captain Devereux was so absorbed with his own need to see Patsey Sullivan Rua, or Rossa, which means the red or the fair, that he quite lost sight of the objections that,

under present circumstances, his friend might have to disclosing his whereabouts.

As the lad stood before him with his head thrown well back, his eagle eye surveying him, and his legs set wide apart, he was a study for an artist.

“Yer honour is a frind?”

The Captain nodded.

“Well I’ll tell yez thin; ye look as if ye could be trusted, and it may be good for yer both.” Then he stopped. “Yer sure yer safe?”

“Safe as a church. I tell you, boy, I *must* see him. I’ll make it well worth your while if you put me in the way of speaking to Patsey. And as for the row, let the police settle that, it is no affair of mine; but if Rua is above ground I’ll unearth him. Are you going to tell me where he is or not?”

“I’ll tell yer honour straight enough. Maybe ye think now it is because of the reward ye promise, but ’tis not. I’d pull the tongue out of me if I thought word of mine wid do him harm, and no gold wid pay me for sellin’ the pass.”

“I want information, and I pay for it.”

Then he slipped a couple of sovereigns into the boy's hand.

I question if the lad ever had handled gold before. He looked at it and tendered it back.

"I'm not going to split for yer money, damn it, no. Take back yer money, sir, take it back." He insisted on pressing it into the Captain's hand. "But if yez wull meet me to-morrow, maybe I'd be able to take ye where ye'd hear tell of him."

"Where?"

"Near the old place, down by the harbour's mouth."

"What! You mean the smuggler's hole?"

"The same."

"Time?"

"Evening—like as if we was goin' a fishin'."

"All right; take your money."

"Divil a stiver; pirhaps, if all ends well, ye'll not forget tu du some ought for me. Now good day tu yer honour; we run round tu-night. The wind is fair, and if Rua is tu the fore, I'll see him before I'm twelve hours older."

With this, without waiting for another word, the lad turned and walked off swiftly.

Captain Devereux watched him. Conflict-ing emotions surged through his brain. Then he moved quickly onward in the opposite direction, and soon found himself near the club in the South Mall.

The cold, dank, winter fog enveloped the whole city, stole into the very marrow of the bones and chilled one. There was nothing cheery to be seen in the semi-opaque, pea-soup atmosphere.

Two or three men were drearily lounging in the club doorway as the Captain entered. He nodded absently, and passed into the bar, where he thirstily tossed off a brandy and soda; indeed, a superficial observer would have said that he needed it—so wan, so cold, so dejected did he look, as if the moist, lugubrious weather had soaked all the starch out of his fine frame and iron sinews. He stood a moment, and then he asked for a glass of raw brandy.

After this the colour came back to the blue lips, and the dogged fire to the eyes. From the bar he went to the reading-room. Empty!

at least, empty of his acquaintance. Then he pulled out his watch; three o'clock already! Too late to lunch with Marie. He sat down and wrote a twisted note—

“MY DARLING,—

“Delayed beyond all reasonable time; tell Fritz to put up my evening clothes; order the Stanhope for half-past four, and I will be in time to drive you down to Moores Court.

“Yours,

“D. T. D.”

He despatched a messenger with this; then a couple of men dropped in early from hunting, splashed and dirty, disappointed with the weather and their sport. They chatted idly away; oysters, rump-steak, champagne, more brandies and sodas were ordered; and Captain Devereux, remembering it was some hours since breakfast, and would be several more before dinner, joined in this repast,

Then pool was played.

So it came that it was past five before he dashed up to his own door on a jarvey, and,

rushing in, found Marie dressed, waiting patiently.

Very sweet and fair and fragile she looked, in her dark blue velvet dress, her sable trimmed coat and hat. Quietly she accepted his confused apologies, and presently they were off.

They drove rapidly, but it was late ere they reached Moores Court, so late, that dressing was a hurried matter.

Ere Denzil had completed his toilet, his wife knocked at his door with—

“I am ready, love. I do not like to go down without you.”

He opened the door and let her in. She looked like a fair sea nymph rising out of her shell—dressed in pale pink velvet and pearls, with soft roses nestling in her hair. Pearls on the pearly throat, whose lustre was dimmed by the fair throat's fairer sheen; arms whose rounded, delicate beauty put to shame the bloom of the pearls that clasped them; and eyes, blue eyes looking lovingly in his out of the child's wistful, tired face.

His face was strangely moved as he looked at her—



“My darling! I am so sorry I kept you waiting. You have had no time to rest; I am afraid you are very tired.”

“Not very, dear. Pray, do be quick.”

“I am ready now.”

He came and stood by her. Then, putting his arm round her, he said—

“One kiss, just to show you forgive.”

She smiled as she raised her dewy lips to his, and was surprised at the fervour with which he kissed and pressed her to him. The brooch in her bosom was broken, and fell to the ground.

Picking it up hastily, he threw it on the table, saying impatiently—

“Come, you will do just as well without it. What an awkward bear I am.”

Then, side by side, they descended the stairs and entered the drawing-room.

After them came the butler, announcing the dinner was served.

It was a large party, and a formal dinner. Two hours at least were spent at table, and the ladies were not long seated in the drawing-room when Captain Devereux glided in. With a word to one and then another, he

shortly found his way to his wife's side, and let himself down on the sofa by her. He looked very white, she thought, as he leant over and took her little hand in his, and under cover of the folds of her dress he pressed it till every finger tingled, and the colour of, physically roused pain dyed her cheeks.

Then, with pained, low voice he whispered—

“Time is up, love. I must be off; take care of yourself. Good-bye, darling.”

Before she had time to say a word he was up, and walking swiftly to the door.

As he passed out, he looked over his shoulder—looked back on the scene he was leaving.

Light, warmth, luxury—love. Soft seats, sweet sounds; pretty women, handsome men, gay talk, life, happiness—the one thing he loved best in the world.

In the hall his servant stood waiting; his coat was on, a moment more and he was out of doors—out in the cold wet night, whose daylight, mist and fog had developed into steady, drenching, silent rain. Through this he drove steadily, and was just in time to catch the night train for Cork.

He had not many hours for sleep, or rather restless tossings and fevered thoughts, ere he was up and away again, facing the pelting sleet of a grey winter's morning, and, alone, took the road for Ballincollig, he said. But he turned off in the Innoshannon direction, and by ten o'clock arrived at —— Hotel there.

He shook himself like a water dog as he jumped from his T cart, threw the reins to an ostler, with strict injunctions to see to the horse, and strode in.

He ordered breakfast, ate it, and then went out.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A NIGHT ON THE BLACK HEAD.

EARTH and heaven met together. The dank earth, steeped in many weeks of drear winter weather, raised its huge bulk, black, cheerless, dripping, and showed its sad wet face to heaven. The heavens swooped down to meet it, shrouding earth's pitiful sodden countenance with thick veils of leaden-coloured clouds, that wept "tear for tear," and emptied the vials of its sorrowful sympathy in cold showers on its bared bosom.

Cold wet vapours rose up. Cold sleet and rain poured down. There was mutual accord, but "cold comfort" in their meeting.

It was a hopeless day. The wind stilled, hushed in sore dismay, failed to utter the faintest whisper of remonstrance against the steady downpour. The rain had been so continuous that the winds had now ceased to revel in its cool luxury. Time had been

when laughing Boreas had flung wide his jubilant arms to welcome Nature's cooling shower, but now the sturdy god was chilled to the heart, and rested dripping, gathering himself together, patiently waiting for his turn to do mischief as he watched his twin-brother element persistently soaking mother earth.

Time would come, no doubt, and that not far distant, when, tired of self-control, of refraining from the riot, King Boreas would throw up his mighty arms to join in the fray and mercilessly rend asunder, and scatter those leaden clouds, disperse, tear, shred to atoms their gauzy filaments, and shriek wild peals of elfin laughter as he danced amid their ruin, or growl with sullen anger, as, again and again, the fleeting clouds eluded his sovereign grasp, and threw their wet arms round the earth.

Long would be the fight, fierce the roar of the elements, and the poor battered earth would lie groaning as she suffered in the fray, while wind and rain, wind and rain, sway too and fro struggling for the mastery; then, acknowledging it a drawn battle, the

winter kings will cease their quarrel—cry *pax*, and amicably retire together to their “secret places,” leaving their battle field strewn with sad memories, which gentle spring, with active fingers, quickly repairs and removes. Then joyous earth will again put forth her green buds and tender blossoms, uncover her hidden lovelinesses, and deck herself with multitudinous, if fragile charms, as she goes with careless laughter, singing, skipping o’er the short road to summer. But this is a dream of the future. Now the watery elements have it all their own way and pour ceaselessly, waifs and strays of sullied snow mingling with the commoner rain.

Even on the bare hill-side there are still pools and rushing streams, and sodden sod, that squishes, when the foot of a dogged pedestrian presses upon it, stamping the liquid water from earth’s surcharged surface.

He is soiled and draggled, this man who wearily mounts the hill side; he has walked some hours through the soaking, steady rain; trodden with fierce determination, at

first over miry roads, then across field paths where the sticky clay has been ankle deep; now, somewhat weary and footsore, he strides along with a sullen, dogged determination to go through to the bitter end with his present undertaking. Now he has breasted the hill and stands awhile; he raises his hand to his brow, shading his eyes, and tries to peer through the blank, slatey surroundings of misty earth and lowering heavens.

All is still—very still, for the small, thin rain is voiceless, and he is all alone on the hill-top.

He stands there, gazing—gazing intently into the opaque surroundings which reveal nothing to his weary eyes but water—water everywhere. He almost starts, strong man as he is, when with loud flapping wings and shrill skreel a wild seagull swoops down, about to alight, then hesitates, and flap, flap, flap, disappears in the gloom, alarmed at finding this uncanny human figure where human form is seldom seen.

Then, in the deepening gloom—for the day is far spent—a low sigh, a faint sob strikes

upon the watcher's ear. Yes, the perceptions of sound are quickened on that lonely hill top, and far away he can discern the weary, ceaseless sobbing of the sad sea waves. Ah, me! Ah me! what memories does it awake—what fears, what hopes? As he listened the wail intensifies, and now and again he fancies he distinguishes great sobs, as of bitterest agony, where the big waters raise their voices to heaven in a wild appeal for mercy, and finding none fall back again to their low monotone of woe.

The shades of evening are closing in, as with a great indrawn sigh he braces his nerves, and, after one or two careful observations as to his whereabouts, proceeds on his dreary journey, descending towards the sound of the waves.

Each moment the wail of the restless waters grows louder and louder, and presently he is within talking distance of this wild companion; he can distinctly hear the loud complaints which the wild waves ceaselessly hurl to the stubborn, obtuse rocks who disdain replying to their angry shrieks of passionate complaint. He shudders, this



solitary man, as he notices how the angry waters rend the heavens with their mingled tale of fierce defiance and sad, sad anguish. He presses onward; he is irritated, not soothed, by the wild sea's companionship; his nerves are strung to tension as this passionate, restless ocean appears to echo the suppressed agony that is surging in his own heart—wearing his very life away—tearing at his vitals, and driving him to mad despair.

Alas! poor heart, that it should be so. Alas! that this man should be goaded on—should be driven he knows not where by his own ill-regulated will.

He hurries angrily forward, and presently leaves the maddening sounds behind him. He makes his way to the water's edge, where the black waters lie still and treacherous, lapping the grey slopes that seem to slide gently down and lose themselves in its vast depths. True, here and there, round, black boulders raise their wet heads cautiously above the deep, showing that dangerous reefs lie slumbering in the depths of the leaden sea. Ah! woe betide the doomed

vessel, the hapless "homeward bound" that is tempted to hug too closely those innocent-looking green slopes. Here and there a shingle nook, or a narrow stretch of golden sand form tiny coves—hidden jewels—very precious in the eyes of the hardy fisherman, who alone knows of their existence, and of the time of the tide when with safety they can seek their shelter, the only shelter to be found from the southern storm all along that bare, wild head.

Woe, woe, woe to the strangers who, drifting helplessly before the storm, see these deceitful green slopes, with their hidden jagged boulders, under their lee. The waves will have no mercy on them—the deceitful shore no welcome shelter. The golden sands, the few havens of safety are difficult of access, and known only to the few who are "natives" and to the manner born; and to the sleepy seals and sea-lions who bask in sweet content in their secure seclusion.

It was black-dark when the weary wayfarer, bedraggled and sad of heart, trudged down to one of these securely hidden nooks.

Not a human being but himself seemed abroad on that lone seashore.

He waited; then raised his voice and houted—shouted a wild cry like the sea-mew. The surrounding hills echoed and thundered back his wild cry in horrible mockery. He was alone. He tried to strike a match to see the hour; they were damp, and refused to light; the air was thick with rain. He felt limp, miserable, dejected; still he waited. He grew impatient, angry. Again he raised his voice; again wild echoes derided, and sea fowl, startled from their eerie rests, flapped noisily about. He sheltered against a rock and rested. He was fagged and weary; it was several hours since he had tasted food—five he had fought with the elements—and many heavy miles he had traversed with dread suspense for company—all for this!

A third time he raised his voice on high; all was still, save the circling birds and the moaning sea, and the weird echo and re-echo of his own raised voice. He walked to and fro on the small level space, for it

was now too dark to find his way over the rough rock or along the slippery hill-side.

He was angrily disappointed—sadly impatient. For fully half-an-hour he paced backwards and forwards—now and again shouting lustily, to be mockingly replied to by the surrounding hills. At last, amid the mocking, he heard human sounds, not the echo of his own voice, and, bounding like a wild goat, through the dark and gloom came the young fisherman. Breathless he landed by his side, greeting him.

“Lord ! yer honour, I’ve waited long. I thought yer ud niver cum.”

“Why I’m here this hour,” indignantly exclaimed the other.

“Aye! but yez wrong. This is the Devil’s Hole ; the Smuggler’s Hole is yonder. ’Twas a miracle I heard ye, and it is not wise to be making a noise here at night, though I misdoubt any fairies, or beaks, or others being abroad to hear us such a hell’s night as this. Come along quick, or maybe the good people will catch us ; or, worse still, the boat will have to go without us.”

“Show the way and I will follow. It is as

dark as a wolf's throat, and almost as easy walking as a slack rope."

Tumbling and stumbling they made their way, the guide sometimes halting and giving a hand to his companion, sometimes pausing to peer forward and listen.

In one of these pauses the question was asked—

"Have you seen Patsey?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"He's a watin' now. Shure it's takin' you to him I be; sore pressed he is, for the beaks were down this mornin', but they got no hints, and the weather sint thim home agin I think."

Again they plunged on. Then suddenly the lad stopped short, grasped his companion, and uttered a low—

"Hush."

The next moment, in a hoarse whisper, he informed his companion—

"Blood and thunder! there they is; they have found the nest. Hist! Don't you hear?"

The man could neither see nor hear. To

his eye or his ear nothing was visible but the black night, the pitiless rain, with the sob, sob, of the sea.

"There, there," pointed the other, crouching down on the wet earth. "I hear the muffled roll of the rowlocks, and I hear the tramp of men, and, by gorrah! I see—I see—Patsey is away in the nevogue" (canvas boat, so light that it is carried on men's shoulders from point to point, and launched at will). "Pull, ye divil, pull, ye divil!" ejaculated the boy with intense feeling, though still he made little noise. "Yez the boy that can give thim the slip. Ye'll not see the inside of Cork jail this time."

"What are you muttering about? I neither see nor hear anything but the cursed sea; let us be moving."

"Whist!" the boy drew himself up from the ground quickly; "they have unearthed Rua. The bobbies will be along here in a minnit; he is making off by the sea. Come, we'll have to run for it."

"Nonsense! Why should we run?" was the first indignant exclamation. Then swift came a second thought; he must not be seen.

or recognised here. There was nothing for it but to run.

"Are yez comin ? for I won't wait," cried the boy, impatiently.

"Yes ; where shall we go—back to the Devil's Hole ?" enquired the man.

"No, no, not there. We must go further than that ; I know a cave. Perhaps Rua will find his way there, too. Now, quick, and no noise about it ; sound travels on this lone mountain."

With that—swift and sure, like an antelope—he glided along, crouching down now and again to listen. No Indian could have been more wily in his movements, more sure of his way, as he pressed onward through the dark night.

Once the tramp of men sounded near, and a word of command was given. How strange it sounded out in the dark night. Now again the two were back where the elements waged their wordy war against the stern silent cliffs. No goat could have jumped lighter than did the fisher boy from crag to crag as he made his way down the face of the cliff, where his companion did not find it

so easy to follow ; his hands were torn, and his limbs bruised as he blindly and recklessly threw himself after his leader, going he scarce cared where.

At last, two hours after their alarm, they stood face to face in a cozy cleft, where sea shells formed a floor, and huge black rocks the walls and roof of a secure lair—a rent in the mighty sea wall of the Black Head, two hundred feet above the sea level, two hundred below the greensward that carpeted God’s earth ; laid smooth and soft, covering the grim rocks to the very edge, where those rocks formed the roof of their nest, and broke off abruptly high above their heads, to fall sheer down into the fathomless deep beneath. A mere goat path—scarce that—mere juttings here and there, uneven freaks of nature on the face of the solid rock, had given them foothold, and led them to a ledge not twenty inches wide, with safety and rest on one side, sure death, fearful disfigurement, on the other ; here they found their rest.

Then, wearily, the man spoke—

“ A pretty mess I have got into ; what the



devil am I to do here? How long must I stay?"

There was almost a ludicrous pathos of appeal in the last few words, which, if the questioner and the questioned could have been seen, would have seemed more ludicrous still.

But it was pitch dark, and the security of their position was more felt than seen.

The boy did not answer; he groped silently about, and presently a spark of light shone in the distance. With drift wood, bramble, and other *débris* he had made a pile which he now lighted, and the weary traveller found consolation in lighting his pipe. Then again, in a more modified tone, he asked—

"Well, what is to be done next?"

"More than myself knows. We'll lie here till daylight anyway. If Patsey gets away he's sure to make for this; if not—"

He threw himself down by the fire, and stared thoughtfully into it.

"Well, if not, what then?"

"By gorrah! I'll thry back for the ould fort; you can go where you like."

"But Sullivan—I *must* see Sullivan. I am not going to be foiled."

"Tare and ages! what can I do? If he is in the stone jug, or a feedin' the fishes, I can't take ye to him. Though faith, thrue enough, you may find yerself in his company in the latther place sooner nor ye think. I wonthers whin I sees ye safe here perhaps ye won't find it so easy to git out in the daylight; it is a wicked path, so it is, and one false step will send ye to the divil soon enough."

"Do you mean to say Patsey may be drowned?"

"In troth I do; it's a dark night to be out on the say, and the wind is risin' now; if he is not on land before this he has not a chance, and the peelers were all along the Head watchin'; if he landed it is like as not they took him."

"Well, then, I suppose we must stay where we are."

"I mean to; you can do as you like."

Turning this kind permission in his mind, the elder man came to the conclusion he

liked better to stay where he was than risk the fate he was told awaited him outside.

Soaked, weary, hungry, and disappointed, he stretched his handsome length down on the sea shell floor, and side by side with his strange companion, fell asleep.

He fell into a sound sleep, lulled by the roar of the ocean. In that sleep strange visions of the past, the present, and the future visited him.

He saw bright sunshine, leaping, dancing waves, and joyous, bright eyes, laughing, mocking him; red lips that tempted and conquered him; scowling men, drunkenness, wild riot; weeping maidens, and tender arms clasping him. Then fair and lordly lawns, stately castles, grew out of fishing boats and seaside hovels. He saw two people—a man of fair fame and rich possessions, a branded outlaw, skulking; an angel face looked pitying down on him; soft hands touched his, and sweet kisses comforted him. Then, when he was yielding himself to their sweetness, lapping himself in heavenly rest, other arms and stronger, came and pulled him down, down, and soft dark eyes looked re-

proachfully in his, and a low voice kept up a cruel, croning, curse, curse, curse : " And your sweets shall be turned to bitter."

Still the pitying angel beckoned him, stretched out fair hands, and he struggled to reach and grasp them, to get free ; struggled though the fair vision grew each moment fainter and fainter, and was almost obliterated by dancing dervishes and hideous demons, who kept yelling in his ear, and held wanton riot round his head.

At last he started and sat up, wide awake. His companion sat up also. The lurid embers of the fire still cast a faint glow, and through the opening of their sea-bound shelter a faint white gleam came feebly in.

There was a horrible uproar, as if all the demons of hell were let loose. Dazed the man looked at the boy—the boy's lips moved, but the sounds were lost in that awful din of roaring sea and howling wind.

He bent over and shouted ; while he spoke a shrill, unearthly sound rung through the vaulted cave, clear and distinct, piercing the roar of the storm.

" It's one of the boys I know. You lie

still and I will see what is to be done. The fewer we have in it the better," yelled the boy.

The man nodded, and the boy walked to the opening where the faint grey light crept in. Leaning firmly against the rock he peered out.

And now, "the winds, the winds, their revels keep;" foaming, dashing, wildly leaping, the cruel waters madly beat the rock-bound coast. They throw their white spray-wreathed arms on high with mad abandonment of delight, till the thick spray washes all sight away, and dazzles and bewilders the boy who is peering out into the night's grandeur.

He can see nothing. Still, spell bound, he watches, hoping—for, now and again amid the jar of the elements, that wild unearthly sound of human agony rings in his ear.

Above, the black heavens envelope the crest of the cliff—press down, down, down, with their fatal folds of black mystery. In very truth it seems as if chaos had come again, as if the world was back in its primeval days, before "the seas and the waters above the earth were divided!" Or, to

times a little later on, when, according to Polynesian tradition, the heavens were so near the earth that men could scarce crawl between; the fable goes on to say, a Hercules sacrificed himself for the good of his fellow men, and, with mighty effort, raised the crushing heavens on his powerful shoulders, giving men breathing space, then, pleased with his success, he had raised them higher—higher still—till there was unlimited space between.

Now, if ever, this Hercules was needed, for the black sky and the black waters seemed met together, and these poor atoms of humanity seemed lost between—the boy and the man—for the latter had joined his companion at the look out.

Faint breaks, mere flaws in the black pall of night, let the fair lady moon peep through, and show her sad face, washed in tears. She made a gallant fight. But no silvery beams, no broad white sheets of light was the poor queen of night permitted to show, as she struggled helplessly with the masterful disturbers of her rightful reign. With true woman wilfulness she again and again tried

to force through the cordon of the storm, and let her fair loveliness shine on the sons of men. Alas ! again and again, with wild rage the fierce insurgents forced her backwards and disfigured the beauty of her presence—hid her pale face in their coarse embraces, and left the world in darkness.

Again, the agonised cry, as of a lost soul going into hell.

And now, high above the roar of the waves, the wild shrieks of the blast, and the cry of the perishing soul, God speaks.

High, above in the heavens rolls the thunder of His voice. All other sounds seem child's play when He raises His voice and deigns to speak. Next, the whole vault of heaven—the wild troubled sea, is illumined with a pale blue light that vanishes as quickly as it comes—but for a moment of time the flash is vivid, and shows every crag—every headland, every tossing wave with awful distinctness. Then all is dark again. Flicker, flicker comes a green light this time, penetrating if possible still further into the hidden horrors of the night, and laying its secrets bare.

While overhead the admonishing voice shouts, "Remember, remember, I am the Lord thy God!"

The two faces peering out of the rift in the rock look ghastly in that glare. Not human—only spirits from another world watching the destruction of this. In the boy's eyes there is an intent agony of suspense, a complete forgetfulness of self, as for the moment he glances up, down. Again the ghostly light dances over the scene—then, with a bright look and a wild cry the boy springs forward; the next second he is lost in the darkness. Horrified, the man's eyes fix on the spot where the lad has disappeared. Sheet after sheet of variegated light flies over the scene—green, blue, violet, white, in quick succession—with black night between. At each lambent gleam the staring eyes of the man catch a glimpse of a thing of fear. The boy, going down, down, fluttering, beating, clinging to the bare rock like one of the wild gulls that are surrounding him.

Then there is an awful crash, the whole artillery of heaven seem fired off at once, and



the heavens are wrenched open to belch forth their red forked tongues, while shot after shot of dropping fire sounds ominously near. And the angry waves with mocking mimicry add their quota to the horrid din.

For a space all is dark, and the man's heart stands still.

Again the varied lights play with his anxiety—the boy is nowhere to be seen. The man throws himself flat down, clinging with hands and feet he peers into the seething abyss. But what *is* the use of looking, where could he be? And, why did he fling himself straight into the jaws of death?

Awed, the man pulls himself backward, within the shelter of the cave, and closes his strained eyes.

A half hour passes. Then he starts, for close at hand he hears the cry of a human voice. He crawls forward—it seems to come from underneath, warily he brings his eyes to the edge, and there, through the dazzling foam a flash of light reveals the boy.

He is pressing on, clinging to the rock, resting on space; the wild winds have torn his poor clothes from him, and his white face and imploring eyes look upward hopelessly.

It is hard to measure space, but he seems ten feet below, and the wind is buffetting him cruelly, the smooth bare rock glistens like glass over his head, no handgrip, no foothold there; and the wild spray is washing and chilling him—chilling him to death—the death that awaits him in the arms of the cruel sea, even now leaping up to meet him.

The man springs backward. Once in shelter he strips himself rapidly—and, one after the other binds his garments together. He does it quickly, nervously—yet carefully, testing each knot as he makes it. One end he ties round his own body, then he creeps forward, out into the howling blast, along the narrow ledge, till he is to leeward of the figure, clinging dead beat against the rock; then he lies down and carefully lets his rope descend. Yes, it is long enough—but, in that wild wind will it ever reach him? See, yes, it is rough tough cloth, and it clings to the rock. With all his power he swings it outward, to see it beat back far wide of its mark. Again he tries, and now the boy sees the attempt at succour. The next flash shows him smiling sadly, and the rope full an arm's length away. How often he tried, how often

he failed, he could not tell; but, at last! he touched him—and, oh, God! as he did so the touch seemed too late!

The lad sprung wildly forward and went down—no, not down, as he can tell by the strain—for now, all is pitch dark, but he is thankful to feel there is pressure and vibration in his rope. He stretches down his strong hand as far as he is able, and presently feels cold fingers meet his—then slowly, painfully, but surely he draws the lad up beside him—drags him up by main force, torn and bleeding—there is very little life in the boy when he drags him into shelter; and a moment after he is quite unconscious.

Poor lad! bruised and torn, the life seems fairly beat out of him; he is cold and limp, soaked with salt spray, and with the poor fragments of his tattered shirt and drawers hanging in ribbons round him.

The man huddles the fragments of his own clothes about the lad, and taking him in his strong arms, tries to infuse some of the heat and warmth, and life, and strength of his vitality into the pulseless form that, having snatched from the jaws of death he now tends

and nurses as if he were a well-loved son, or brother of his own.

Through long hours they lay there, and finally clasped together, slept, cold and stiff; while the storm rages outside, and presently the cold day brakes.

Then, in the grey light of early morning, the lad awoke, and seeing the rest that supported him, he reverently lifted the hand of his preserver and pressed it to his lips. In doing so he roused him.

A queer picture for the delicately nurtured and the gently bred.

Boy and man resting there, crouching for shelter like brute beasts in the caves of the earth, without food and devoid of clothing. With all the sad tragedy, there was comedy in the situation. And the strong man laughed outright, while he exclaimed—

“Well, you unfortunate young rascal, here is a pretty go. What mad devil possessed you last night? Couldn’t you stay in shelter when you had it, and not go looking for kingdom come, as you did? A pretty close shave, too, I can tell you, my lad. ’Twas an orange to a thousand against your coming back.”

"I know it," said the boy, sadly. "But Patsey was down there."

"Patsey! Where?"

"On the rocks, yer honour. He must have missed the goat's ladder—and—and—I seed him. I thried to save him, but—" He shuddered. "Glory be to God, I had no chance. He was too far out; the storm must have bothered him. I thried to make him see, or hear, but it was no use."

He ceased.

"Well!"

The boy looked at him—

"He was there one moment; the next time I could see, the rock was bare, and the great waves leaping up on it. Afther I saw sumtin batin again the cliff. That was Rua. Then I thried to get back; but the wather was cross my path, and I had to do the best I could. Glory be to God! You know the rest."

Then silently the two looked out on the broadening light. Though gloomy and dark, it was full day; the wild clouds scudded overhead, and the sea roared angrily beneath.

"Well! it is time we thought of leaving this. What the deuce are we to do for

clothes? Pretty cut we'll make. Tell me, is there any house near?" asked the man.

"Devil a one."

"Well, then, what do you propose to do?"

"Wait."

"For what, in heaven's name?"

"For some of the boys."

"You think they will come looking for us, then?"

"Not for us—they know naught about us—but for Patsey. They know he'd make for here. He'd want food."

"By Jove, so do I."

"And we must wait till they come, be it long or short, for wid or widout the clothes the pass is barred."

"The what! How?"

"The goat ladder is closed. 'Twas closed on Rua last night. The rock fell; 'twas that put him asthray. They'll have to take us up by ropes."

Then, huddling their rags about them, these two strange companions sat down to wait with what patience they could command, looking out on the storm-tossed waves beneath and the grim stern sky above them.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### RESCUE.

THE man huddles himself together ; crushes his strong arms round his own stalwart body outwardly, with the same fierce impatience that inwardly his proud impetuous will beats down and tramples on the bitter disappointment that cruel fate and the ravenous sea has measured out to him.

For this man, crouching here in this sea-bound cave, is grievously disappointed. A special object, very dear to his heart, had induced him to undertake this rash expedition, which, so far, has proved a disastrous failure, and which may be more fatal still ere Providence permits him to return to his proper place in the social sphere. Had his expedition even proved a complete success and ended fortuitously, it was one he would have wished unrecorded in the annals of his life. How much more now did the utterly defeated man wish the past twenty-four hours could

be buried in the grave of oblivion. And the coming hours? Alas! they, too, might prove pregnant with triplets of evils for him!

What wonder, then, that he huddles himself together and looks a very outcast in his woe?

How dire the necessity that had driven him to the Black Head he alone knew. It would not redound to his honour as an officer or a gentleman if open-mouthed rumour spread the news that he had stolen out for a secret interview with a man who was "wanted" by the police; had run this risk to meet a man "on the run," one who was hiding in the secret corners of that wild sea-bound headland, evading the laws of his country which he had recklessly outraged.

With bitter irony he meditated—

"Fit end to my fool's errand. To be caught in the toils! Trapped in a net of my own weaving! I have put myself in the power of that amphibious biped! (with a contemptuous thought of his companion), and I suppose will have to run the gauntlet of the observations, wonders, and enquiries of at least a score more of the honourable



natives—possibly old acquaintances; if so, so much the worse—before I can make my escape, see the end of it, and be as well off as I was yesterday, last week, any time this last six months—any time before I started on this cursed Don Quixote expedition. I wish I was clear out of it, that I had never seen Black Head—aha! never seen it at all. Oh! if I could only wipe out the past. But what is the use! I have made my bed, and so I must lie on it. If it was only I; if I could take it all on my own shoulders, I would; but I cannot—I cannot. That cruel restless sea seems to have swallowed up the one clue that might have helped to set me free. There it goes! insatiable greedy monster, roaring beneath my feet, crying aloud for, tossing its white arms on high in pursuit of, more victims. Good heavens! I may be the next.”

Here the contemplation of what might be softened him, though it did not change the current of his thought.

“I came in all honesty, determined to find out the truth. Fate has played me a scurvy trick! The secret I long to know lies buried, fathoms deep. Truly, ‘the one has been

taken and the other left.' Pat has gone to his long account. His sins and his shortcomings are past repentance. I must condone his offences to myself, as he lies tossing in the restless deep, even though the future of my whole life is poisoned by the lost clue that is buried within him, though I stand here hopeless, a baffled man, chewing the cud, reaping the fruit of the mixed seeds I sowed in the reckless days of my misguided youth."

Then he smiled grimly.

"A pretty figure I make! A nice come down from my high estate. Oh! mother, if you only knew the miserable result of all your schemes and hopes. Oh! love, oh! love, thank God you cannot see me. Caged, caught like a wild beast, helpless as any fettered convict, I am cold, hungry, nearly naked, and, alas! no nearer the truth than I was a month ago!"

Then the cry of his heart would have vent.

"O God! Thou knowest how hard it is. Thou knowest I came on this mad errand fully determined to do my duty. But what can I do? I'm helpless."

With a weary sigh he turned from the

angry sea and paced like a caged lion restlessly to and fro in the narrow cell, where the stern silent rocks saw, what no human eye had ever seen, his dark eyes moist with bitter soul-wrung brine.

While, stung with the arrows of thought, the strong man paced up and down, his companion kept patient watch ; knowing that on his vigilance depended their chances of escape, and possibly more lives than their own. With patient endurance he kept his stand on the rocky ledge, where the keen wind cut like a knife, with his sharp eye scanning the cliff wearily. Poor boy ! he was sorrowful, faint, and hungry, but took no rest ; never sought the shelter of the cave, as with watch-dog fidelity he kept guard.

Now and again he gave a hurried glance of interest and affection at the tall figure that restlessly trod the narrow space, or threw itself for a moment on the shell floor of the cave, and then started up again to recommence his patrol.

Neither of them spoke as they endured their enforced imprisonment.

Paudeen's thoughts were full of the sad

tragedy of the past night, and of his own most wonderful escape. His great affectionate, ignorant heart was full of thankfulness to the man who had saved him. There was nothing he was not prepared to do or suffer for him, for the gentleman who had risked his own life to save the poor fisher-boy from the cruel hungry sea.

With his heart full of gratitude he pondered on the danger and difficulties of their present position—planning in his busy brain how they were to escape. Experience made him fully alive to the dangers, and he trembled when he thought of the horror of possible failure.

In the storm and dark of the past night instinct had enlightened him, he had felt more than seen that something bad had happened. Morning light had shown him his suspicion was correct. The goat's ladder was gone.

Beneath him, as he looked down, he saw a great bank of greensward, rock, and earth being sucked into the deep waters by the hungry waves, who leaped up and carried back hard-won trophies of earth and rock to-

mother ocean as they fell with heavy thud on to her broad bosom.

The goat's ladder was obliterated—choked with *débris*—and where a fairy bridge had been a wide chasm now yawned. There was no handgrip or foothold beyond the narrow ledge that bounded their lair, no hope of escape that way.

And worse still, Paudeen knew full well that the broken cliff must have changed the features of the locality overhead.

When the "boys" came to seek for Pat they would be bewildered—with no landmark to guide them to the cave, they might be weeks searching for its whereabouts, so much alike were all the dark crevices in those giant sea walls. Therefore he kept watch; therefore he stands out in the bitter blast, waiting for signs of succour.

Alas! poor boy, his numbed limbs remind him that human endurance has its limits. If help does not come speedily he cannot hold out against the persistent attacks of the elements.

The wet, the cold, the hunger, the exposure, the anxiety, and even the bruises of

the past eighteen hours were beginning to tell on the boy's hardy frame. A numb stupor was stealing over his senses—against which he battled with dogged determination, he would not quit his post until the watch dog's duty was performed.

Mid-day had come and gone, and yet no sign of help. The great heavens, the beetling rock, and the restless sea were all he could see. The clouds scudded before the wild wind—like frightened sheep worried by dogs, flinging their white fluffs recklessly one on top of the other. The cry of the storm still panted, sobbed, howled in his ears. Wild sea birds shrieked and circled, beating their great wings angrily as they fought lustily with their native element. The great sea heaved its huge bosom, and sobbed and moaned piteously.

And these two human beings, perched midway between sea and sky, seemed cut off from all earthly sympathy, alone in the storm with their God.

Sad of heart, and silent of tongue, they crouched in their seagirt and landlocked lair. They feared the closing in of a second night.

All the dash of reckless daring, the youth, the strength, the sap of their manhood seemed thoroughly washed out of them as they stubbornly endured the fate they were helpless to improve.

At last the elder started up, impatiently crying—

“Hang it, boy! we must do something. We cannot lie here and die like rats in a hole; let us make some effort for dear life. Let us make it before the dark comes—before starvation takes what’s left of the man, out of us. Come! I *will* make my way to the top.”

“Hist! be aisey! It’s no good. If you wur twice the man yee are, yee’d have to bide, barrin yee has wings. The cliff hangs over. The ledge is gone beyant. Six feet from this yee’ll have naught forranent yees out but Davy’s locker. Bide awhile, yur honour, and rest, the ‘boys’ is sure to come.”

Helplessly the man sunk down—and the boy watched. Half an hour after his eyes brightened, and he shouted joyfully—

“Didn’t I tell yees! there they are. Glory be to the Blessed Virgin, it *is* Murt Oge. If

there is one man better nor another 'tis he. He's the boy wull know what to do. Glory be to God! I think he sees us."

No.

The two desperate men stood on their narrow edge and waved, and waved, and waved. The man on the cliff moved about, he evidently did not perceive them.

Presently the man above lay down and peered over the edge of the cliff; he was looking, but they were hid from his gaze.

And no wonder! for the thick gauze of the sea spray was dancing between him and them.

They shouted. Poor pigmy shouts, lost in the roar of the waves, mocked by the shrieks of the startled birds. Again and again they raise their voices and yell till the sound sounds strange and unnatural in their own ears.

At last! they see a second figure run and join the first. This second man comes from directly overhead, he has evidently heard them. Together the two on the cliff peer over—and now—they waved their hats and disappear.

Paudeen sinks down exhausted.



"Thanks be to the Holy Mother of God, they'll not lave us long now."

"How are they coming? They seem to have gone right away."

"Yis, they've gone for the ropes and more help. And now, Masther Tredgar dear," the man started when thus addressed, but the boy, in his earnestness, did not notice or heed it. "It will be an awful job gettin' us up. I'll be right enough, devil a fear, I'm used to it, but sorrow one of me knows how we are to land you, and, masther dear, is thur anything—any one if—" the boy hesitated, "if the rope frays, or the wind is too strong—two hundred feet in mid air is not an easy journey to travel, for those who are new to it, specially such a night as this. Maybe you'll not reach the top alive."

The boy put out his hand and touched his companion tenderly, and the man looked him straight in the eyes. Then he spoke.

"Boy, it must never be known *how* I came here, do you understand?" The boy nodded.

"I can trust you—"

"To the death, yer honour, I'd give my life for yez any day."

"Then—if—if anything happens—go to Cork, to the Barracks, and tell Colonel Fostescue—that—that—*Captain Devereux*—mind the name, was lost on the cliff at Black Head—" so far he spoke slowly and solemnly; then he went hurriedly, "and now, heed me, make out what tale you can about my being here; you found me on the cliff, and brought me to shelter from the storm, that's a fact, but never let the *truth out, that I came to meet Pat Sullivan*. If I get up alive, get me off as quickly as you can, and no talk about it—me, my business, *or my name*. Will you promise?"

"I'll swear it. By the bones of my dead mother, and by the Blessed Virgin, and St. Pathrick, I promise."

"All right, then look here. This is my purse, there are ten pounds in it, you take it—"

"By the powers, no. I don't want yer money, and maybe they'd say I robbed or murdered ye, put it up—put it up—sure I'd go further than to Cork, fur the man who saved my life."

"You are right about the money, they

might bring you to task about it. But, my poor boy, I do want to do something for you, if I only knew how."

"Be aisy now, there is one thing your honour can do. Will you shake hands with a poor boy and say, 'I trust you, Paudeen ;' *that* would make me very happy."

"That I will, my boy."

He held out both hands and shook the lad heartily. Before the boy let them go he kissed them.

"Please God we'll pull you up if it's in the art of man to do so. And, masther dear, you'll do exactly what we tell you. Oh ! it's risky work, and wid the cliff fresh broken, too. I don't know how the boys will manage the ropes, but Murt is a born cliff man, he has been down oftener than any man in these parts. If it's to be done he's the boy wull do it."

"Well ! we must only trust God and do our best."

"Thruë," responded the boy, shaking his head.

Then they sat silent, prepared for the worst, each occupied with their own

thoughts. Captain Devereux's mind wandered to the world that seemed so far away—to the lovely, loving wife, his beloved one. His heart stood still when he thought of her, and of the great blight that even now was hanging over her fair young life.

"My darling! my darling!" cried his heart, "if the end comes now it may spare you much. My death may be the greatest blessing God can send you—if it is—so let it be. What matter what becomes of me, if only you are saved. Sweet, tender little flower, I wonder will you ever know how desperately I have loved you."

Then, through all the raging wind, and the clapt hands of the sea that made the landsman's head dizzy with its wild hurly-burley, came help. Shouts, and fragments of broken stone thrown headlong to the deep, first roused them, put them on their metal to seize and assist the coming man.

Yes, the coming man, for high overhead, dashed about, played with by the storm—swaying hither and thither—twenty feet over the hungry sea, dancing on space, then dashing inwardly and crushing against the rock—

came a human being. It was a bold man that came thus. A very pack thread seemed to support him as he fought his way inch by inch, slowly descending towards them.

Now he is nearly on a level, but, oh, God! far, far out, dangling over the horrid sea, and wild sea birds circle screaming round him. Will he ever reach, will he ever land on this narrow ledge! He swings inwards, dashed by the furious wind, with foot and hand he tries desperately to secure a hold—hopelessly—the next vibration of the rope swings him far outward. Again he tries—again, again; at last, Paudeen, with quick eyes, has met him, clasped his arms round him, and holds him, himself held firmly by Captain Devereux, and even then, the three men are nearly jerked off their precarious foothold.

Panting and locked together they draw themselves along the little space, and into the shelter.

When the new comer can gather breath, he reverently uncovers his head, drops on his knees, and murmurs a heartfelt prayer of thanksgiving; then, standing up, he looks curiously around. A model of strength is

this man. Bull-necked, long-armed, with the shoulders of a Hercules; with a face bronzed and seared by many years' exposure to harsh winds and burning suns, with lines of lawless passion, and deep debauch furrowed on his cheeks, but withal, with an honest, downright if dare-devil expression, this man looked round him surprised. "Holy Moses! Who'd uve thought to see yees here, Captain Tredgar, yer honour; did ye fall from the skies, or did the divil himself land ye—and—where is Pat Rossa?"

Paudeen shook his head, and pointed significantly downwards.

"Lord sakes? and how did yees escape?"

"We were here before the storm, and he must have missed the path."

Paudeen here went into a brief history of the last twelve hours, after which Murt Oge shook his head with the muttered ejaculation—

"Glory be to God! but it's wonderful!" adding, almost in the same breath, "Here boys, I thought yee'd need this," as from his waist he unstrapped sundry substantial if not delicate fragments of food.

The two ate voraciously. He smiled to

see them. Pauddeen, presently, between two huge mouthfuls, managed to enquire—

“Where’s the drop of the craythur; sure yees did not come widout dat; my heart is wake for the want of it.” Murt shook his head—

“Faith, thin, it’s just what I did. I was afraid to trust myself. This is no night to have a drop in, when one wants to be dancing on the slack rope. Pauddeen, me boy, we’ll have enough to do for all our sinses this blessed night if we’re to clime—and now,” said Murt, turning to the Captain, “tho’ myself is glad to see yees, Captain, dear, faix I rather t’was any place else I had de pleasure of meeting yees than in the gulls home; it will be the devil of a job to get yees out of this, and the sooner we goes about it the bether, for the weather is not mendin’, and if the wind veers a point, maybe we’d not get out at all, at all. So as soon as yees ate yer bit, we’ll sthart.”

“Right, Murt, ye’ll take the Captin up, and mind, mum’s the word about this.”

Pauddeen rose, and held a whispered talk

with his fellow-cragman, then they prepared to start.

It was a curious process, and enough to make the stoutest heart quake.

Murt had his rope still round his waist, a second one hitched to it, and a third or slighter guide-rope coiled round and round his body. This he now unwound. It was spliced to the spare rope. Carefully he examined the splicing, and then he took the Captain and bound him in a coil similar to the one that encircled his own waist.

Then he looked out into the gathering twilight, next scanned the Captain's stalwart form, as he stood silently beside him. He looked thoughtful, like a man who fully understood the awful risk they were about to run, who meant to take every possible precaution, and yet was not afraid.

He unloosed his own rope, and took a firm knot, uniting it to the other rope, over the head of his companion, then he bound it firmly on again round his own stout waist.

"Now, Captain, are yees ready?"

"Yes."

"Thrust yersel to me, and do exactly what



I tell yees. Clasp me round the waist, and hold on for dear life ; and, if yer wise, keep yer eyes shut, for no seein' will help yees in a journey like dis—t'will only puzzle yees to look."

The Captain did as he was told, and then Paudeen signalled to those above. Presently the rope tightened, then they were pushed out by Paudeen, the guy-rope keeping them somewhat steady.

It was an awful moment when the Captain felt his feet swinging in the air. He could not help but look. It was not a reassuring sight. The black heavens overhead, the blacker sea beneath, and only these slight ropes drawing them, oh ! so slowly upward.

Now the wind dashes them in against the cruel rock, Murt's active feet and strong arm fend off, but bruised and scraped they are. Now outward they fly, to be again caught by the wind and pressed back against the cold, wet stones. Paudeen, underneath, watches them, and does his best, clinging to the guy-line, to guide and mitigate this horrible swinging to and fro, he grows giddy as he watches them, and those above watch

with even more anxiety, and do their laborious work, slowly of necessity, but with great care.

There are thirty men at least, each using all the strength, the wit, and the nerve God has given them to land these men safely.

It was just here the land-slip had taken place in the past night, and the piece of cliff that had fallen away had left a crumbling foothold with sharp edges, where once smooth turf had been; it was not safe to venture out on this. Added to which, the wind still swept with strong force along the head-land; it needed a strong man's strength to breast it. But four men, picked by Murt Oge, did creep out on this treacherous, shelving cliff—yes, and crept steadily along on their faces, drawing their own weight and coils of trusty rope with them. These were the rope pioneers, and it was with their help Murt Oge had managed to descend. Most carefully they had guided the rope, and kept it, as far as in their power lay, from chafing against the sharp edges of the rock, where, in spite of all their caution, there was much friction, as hand over hand they paid it out. And again

further down, beyond their reach, there was a knife-like ridge that tried the stout rope severely.

They had breathed freer when they saw their mate landed, or rather knew he had reached his destination by the slackening of the rope.

On the upward journey their fears increased, as every inch of rope that passed through their horny hands was horribly frayed, and every hand's-breadth more so than the one that preceded it. And now two lives were swinging in the air, two human beings hovering over the dark abyss.

Each rope was watched by two men, who signalled to the crowd inland to ease, or pull hard as necessity required. The two faces, watching the spare rope, not the one by which Murt had descended, grew white. With agonised earnestness they hurried the men, the rope they were now hauling was more than half cut through, and the men were yet one-fourth of the way from safety. Great drops of sweat stood on their brows, and the men pulled, aye with a will.

Meanwhile Paudeen was congratulating

himself; half the journey was over. How small they looked and how rapidly they were nearing the top. Thank God!

Then, above the storm, a cry of agony rings out, and two men throw themselves back and cling convulsively to the slippery earth, while stones and other matters roll downward. The rope has snapped, and with the jerk nearly pulled them over. It falls—falls—jerking those figures in mid-air, and almost separating them, wrenching them asunder, from what is now a desperate embrace. It is an awful moment. Murt throws one strong arm round the Captain, and his face is desperate white as he hisses through his closed teeth—

“Hold on, hold on, for God’s sake!”

The rope swishes past, catching the Captain’s head with a stunning blow. Oh, God! his arms relax; he looses his hold, and his head drops heavily on Murt’s shoulder. Now they swing wildly out, another fearful jerk as the broken rope swings full length beneath, but Murt’s strong arms are clasped firmly round the heavy weight, that he feels is slipping, slipping from him!

Again they dash inward, beaten against.

the cruel rock which Murt has no hand to fend off. They seem to spin round and round, and the coil round Murt's middle tightens fearfully. The knot he so carefully rove is bringing the second man's weight to bear upon his rope.

With agonised eye he glances upward; full fifty feet to travel—will the strained rope bear their double weight?

His iron muscles close convulsively on the dead weight that is bearing so heavily on him. He feels his brain in a wild whirl. A selfish fear for one second thrills through him. The love of life is strong in his sin-smudged soul. The man he supports is unconscious, probably dead.

One rope has failed them.

The other is strained. There is yet forty feet to travel; *can* this rope bear the double weight?

Will the one rope save the two? For one second the coward thought visits Murt: Shall he let the man he holds in his arms go? No, no, no, answers his brave heart. And then, in the midst of all their deadly peril a grim smile gleams on the knotty,

weather-tanned face. "Was it to hindther coward Murther, that my good angel made me hitch his honour's line to mine. I could not get rid of his weight if I would," was the thought that caused it.

Away, dangling in the deepening gloom, sways the end of the broken rope, considerably increasing the dangers and difficulties of their upward journey. Above strong men are pulling for dear life; as they near the top and their rope grows, every second shorter, their course grows steadier; but they are cruelly beaten inward by the fierce wind. By main force the men drag them upward; drag them scraping against the hard jagged cliff, where the track of their ascent is marked by fragments of clothes, skin, and blood. At last—

Torn, bruised, insensible, bleeding copiously Murt Oge is seized by out-stretched arms and drawn over the edge. Crushed in his strong arms, gripped with almost death agony is a tall strong man. With solemn, sobered faces the men draw the limp bodies inwards and place them with care on the greensward. Then, with astonished eyes,

they regard first one, then the other of the calm, giant figures that side by side lie before them. The men look down and look up, exclaiming—

“It’s not Patsey!”

“Not Rossa!”

“Not Rua!”

“Lord! it’s the Sassenach—it’s Tredgar!”

“Glory be to God! what brought him here?”

“The divil.”

“Sure enough. Divil’s work for him, anyway.”

Then the men look at one another seriously.

“He’s dead.”

“They’re both gone.”

“An awful night’s work!”

“Well, boys, what is to be done now?”

“Sorra, one of me knows. I’d swear there were two figures on the ledge.”

“Well, if there were he must stay there—no more going down the cliff to-night; one crowner’s inquest is enough for me, and here’s work for him sure enough.”

“Glory be to God, it’s awful!”

"It's bad work this—by gorrah, there is not a man in the parish we could as ill spare as Murt. Come, Thade, give us a hand and we'll carry them."

"Where?"

"Where, but to Murt's; it's nearest hand. Run on, gosson, and tell them what's comin'."

Here, suspended animation returned to Murt. What were a few blows on the head, scratches and bruises to his hardy, sea-tanned hide, and bullet head. It was more the pressure of the taut rope round his middle than actual hurt that had squeezed the breath out of him.

"Hold hard, boys, not so fast; that *was* a close shave, and no mistake. Glory be to God and the Holy Virgin! I did not think ever to put my foot on the solid earth again." Then he looked down. "Lord save us! I hope he's not dead."

He knelt down and felt, peering into Captain Devereux's face.

"Dead, no; kilt a bit, and no wonther, the rope hit him as it fell; took him round the neck and nearly throttled him."



"Be gorrys! and what the divil brought him there."

"Sorra one of me knows—or cares either—he's out of it now, and *that's* more my concern. Come, look alive, boys! Pauden is waiting down there. We must send a rope down for him."

To this there was a low murmur of dissent—bad night—too dark—ropes cut, etc., etc.

Murt stamped.

"Blood an ouns, men! To hear yees talk—the boy is half dead as it is—and up he must come to-night; get another rope this minute, de yees hear me."

They looked darkly at him.

"Thade Burke, Mik Sullivan, Murt Dhu, ye'r not the men to leave a mate to die for want of help; run to my house, there is a new rope there I brought from Kinsale on Saturday, we'll stretch it now for Pauden; and, boys, carry the jintleman along wid ye, keep a silent tongue in yer head, and tell the ould woman to look afther him till I cum. He's a stranger, and it shan't be said that we men of 'The Head' didn't give our best to the stranger when he thrushted us. Look

alive now, and don't be long ; not a step will I stir from this till I have Paudeen beside me. Run ye divils, run, don't be looking at me like so many omadhauns. The longer ye look the darker the night will be gettin—"

Thus coaxed, and thus adjured, the men ran, the needed rope was soon fetched, and down by the guy rope the precious warp was sent. Carrying no burden it travelled safely, and Paudeen, being light of weight, and to the manner born, made a safe journey to the upper world. Then they all followed to Murt's house, crowding in as many as the small hovel could shelter.

Captain Devereux, laid in the room, was slowly coming to himself. Truly he had had a glimpse of the other world, and gone through the throes of death, and was now waking up to a sense of the uncomfortableness and unsuitableness of his present position.

## CHAPTER IX.

### ONLY KILT.

Would that God the giftie gie us  
To see ourselves as others see us.

Is it always desirable that it should be so? Doubtful, I think.

In "the room" at Murt Oge's cabin lay our hero—hero *pro. tem.*, and for want of a better, for real hero our poor battered, disappointed friend, Captain Devereux, can scarcely be called.

Heros are made of other, better-seasoned, higher-tempered metal than ordinary mortals, and this impetuous-natured, unwisely-governed, well-meaning being now waking up from his death-like unconsciousness, is a very ordinary mortal indeed.

He is no hero—not he, he is only a man, a poor biped creature with strong passions that he has never been taught to control, with many fine instincts, an average amount of brain, and a big, loving heart.

By nature he is impetuous, impulsive, and desperately self-willed. He is a spoilt child of fortune, who has hitherto worshipped one idol—self.

Heretofore he has petted, pampered and indulged this idol with heedless carelessness. And now, like many another, he finds this over-indulged “self” a troublesome tyrant, a hard task-master. He finds this autocrat “self” suffering from the ill-effects of his own sad blunders. He has thoroughly enjoyed all the silly, weak follies, all the easy, pleasant indulgences of his youthful fancies; but now he is face to face with the results of the past self-indulgence, and does not find the picture pleasant.

It is ever so. When reason matures, when we know ourselves as we are, so often do we feel, though we do not so often admit, that the dear delights in which we revelled in the years of our early adolescence are very dear bought pleasures indeed. Ten out of every twelve of us would gladly give some years of our lives if only we could undo some of the irrevocable past. Few, indeed, there are who have not done “the things they would not,”

and who do not wish, sometimes from the lowest of motives, "their *own* comfort sake," that these things were not.

As reason developes, some are moved by higher motives, have nobler objects in view than "self," and would lead wiser lives if they could ; but, alas ! they find themselves hampered, ghosts of the past bar their progress upward and onward, and self-made miseries trammel their efforts to the end of their lives ; or, still indulging a nobler, though selfish self, they trample down the ghastly hindrance that puts its pale face between them and their present desire—they do so at all risks, aiming at wise, and possibly much-to-be-desired ends, but surely do ghosts multiply, gathering as they go, gibing, and mocking, and hindering, making life one long, untold misery, a very hell upon earth.

Why will the young and the careless refuse to take warning, to look ahead, to see themselves in the many who have run the race before them, wrecked their lives, and who, some living, and, alas ! many dead, are as gaunt sign-posts to warn the giddy throng who dance so heedlessly along, never dream-

ing that the little sins, so trifling and yet so pleasant, that almost unconsciously they are allowing to steal into their daily lives, will one day turn and rend them ; prove a very Nemesis as hard to get rid of as the fabulous old man of the sea ?

It is so easy and pleasant, saves so much trouble to leave the door on the latch, and let the seven merry little devils slip in. Yes far easier to leave the door open than to lock it. But it is easier far to lock the door and keep out the insidious little urchins when they playfully clamour for admittance, than it is to turn them out when once they have made good their entrance and established a footing in our hearts. The playful imps, like ill weeds, grow apace, sometimes outgrow our control, and choke the garden flowers ; become troublesome, obnoxious, masterful tyrants.

Then the weak ones of the earth submit to the fate they feel unequal to contend with, become reckless, utterly depraved—or die.

The stronger wrestle with the devils, and endeavour to drive them out, but, alas ! how few come off victors in the unequal warfare.

What is one against so many? Few, very few, are able to turn out the devils and trample them underfoot with conquering virtues. And, ah, me, it is sad to think, even when we are successful, what sad scars and unsightly running sores remain, searing our memories and branding our lives. As long as we are habilitated with our mortal flesh, we can never quite get rid of the signs and tokens of our past. Now and again, ever and always, we are mortifyingly reminded of the time we have abused. The battle, if we are given power to fight, is never over while we linger here below, never over till we coil ourselves to sleep, and awake in a new world, with a new body, and a new, never-ending day before us.

So now, in his matured manhood, Captain Devereux is shedding the skin of the past. Chameleon-like he is changing. Hating the old life and the old self, he is ashamed of things he has done. He feels there is a nobler, brighter, better life for such as him to live than the very mundane existence that he has hitherto very contentedly led. With all the enthusiasm of his impulsive, energetic

nature, he has set himself to work to make his path straight. He is full of good intentions, but there are many obstacles to be overcome before he can reach the fair haven where he would be. It is weary, uphill work, and, so far, the seven devils have had the best of it, as, somehow, they generally do.

The companionship of the sweet girl, whose innocent life he had joined to his, has in some measure made him long for better things.

Her trust, her faith, her winsomeness, her crystal purity, are ever a silent reproach to him, knowing what he is. Gladly would he undo the past, get rid of the muck that besmears the Augean stable, and bring pure things to meet the pure of his present.

We left our hero—or, at the present, our victim—sick, sore weary at heart, with a bruised body and a throbbing head, lying on “the” settle, in “the” room of Murt Oge’s hovel.

He was slowly recovering his consciousness ; the old crone who watched by his side, occasionally leaning over and daubing his aching head with coarse-smelling whiskey,



and who mouched hideously as she did so, was a horrid nightmare, a very witch of Endor to his puzzled eyes, as he vainly tried to rouse himself sufficiently to understand his unusual surroundings.

Presently the Babel of uncouth tongues from the outside kitchen stirred the memory of his torpid brain; he awoke to the situation. He remembered that action was imperative. He must not lie here indefinitely. He must be up and doing.

Murt Oge and Paudeen Sullivan stole in to look at him. Honest fellows, they entered "the room" as noiselessly and reverently as in them lay; nevertheless, the tramp of Murt's brogues sounded as thunder in the ears of the injured man. Each footfall was as the stroke of a sledge hammer on his quivering nerves. With rough kindness, the two poor ignorant fishermen questioned and inspected him as to his injuries; then Murt, with a satisfied sigh of relief, grunted—

"Glory be to God, your honour's kilt entirely, and thanks be to the Lord it is no worse. Is there anything in life Murt Oge can do for yez?"

Then, being assured there was not, Murt Oge took himself to the outer kitchen again, to satisfy the assembled multitude with the intelligence that the gentleman was "only kilt." Then he gave "the boys" a sup of potheen, to warm the cockles of their hearts, and to drink to his honour's recovery; after which he told them to "clear out," and then, tired with his exertions, he threw himself on the hearth and slept—the sound sleep of a thoroughly exhausted man.

Meantime Paudeen had flung himself, tatters and all, on the floor, by the side of the Captain's settle, like a faithful watch dog, determined to stick by his master and see what he could do for him.

The old crone nodded over the smouldering peat, and presently nodded off to sleep, and into a sound sleep, albeit she crouched, uncomfortably balanced on a three-legged stool, and did so at the imminent risk of her yellow and wrinkled old neck, to say nothing of the "cutty pipe" that, dead out, was affectionately squeezed between her puckered, thick lips.

And so the silence of the night—a silence

big with mysterious sounds—fell on the inmates of that lone, smoking hillside hovel, round which the lessening storm laughed and shrieked, wild with delight at the wanton mischief it had done.

While the others slept soundly, Captain Devereux musefully meditated, now fully alive to the fact that he must be up and doing. Yes; he must move, must get out of this, and that quickly. Aye, though he aches all over, though the idea of motion is an agony, though he is fully aware of his bruised body, broken arm, and head that buzzes as if with the whirr of a monster steam engine, who by some strange freak of nature has been allowed to take up its abode in his brain, and which whirrs faster and faster the more he tries to control its movements; he is quite aware he must be up and doing; must get home as quickly and as quietly as possible.

How?

It is two hours and more ere the sick man has made up his mind. Then slowly, painfully, and very quietly he leans forward and touches Paudeen, who is breathing heavily.

Paudeen lifts himself cautiously. They hold a whispered conclave, then both lie down again.

At four o'clock in the morning, in the white light of the lady moon, Paudeen steals out, and, with long, swinging, light footsteps, "foots it" over the soaking sod to the river.

## CHAPTER X.

### HOME.

IN the West, the orb of departing day was sinking slowly to rest; its grand round face one blaze of red, gorgeous and beautiful, was disappearing inch by inch behind the lovely, undulating hills; then dipping down and dying the pathless sea with floods of crimson glory, rippled over with rays of burnished gold. Overhead the sky was steeped with crimson, across which swept flames of red and gold, waving "a bright good night to thee, love, a bright good night to thee."

It was a gorgeous sight.

One of those indescribable scenes that Turner has in vain tried *truly* to depict, and made his name immortal even by his feeble attempts.

It was—and now it is not.

It has vanished. The day is gone to rest, and the early night has come to us, a night

when the high canopy of heaven is arched above a limitless, etherealised space, out of which the myriads of eyes of countless angels seem to beam down on the sons of men as they creep round the treadmill of earth.

The strong men lift their heads on high and suck in the metal of their being, as the keen, fresh breath of these guardian angels seems wafted earthward to invigorate and refresh them. The magic touch sends a thrill of ecstasy dancing through their veins; they feel purified, exalted, better for the bright message thus sent.

But the poor weakling, the sick, the suffering, the sin-debased, they feel none of this. The crisp chill pierces through the chinks of their harness, penetrates to the marrow of their bones, and brings them untold suffering.

Through such scenes of natural transformation as these Captain Devereux was driven to his own door, lifted from his dog-cart, and assisted to his bed.

What agonies his crushed body suffered as he came through that keen frosty air he

never told; but, judging by his white, drawn face, they must have been pretty severe.

Mrs. Devereux was dining out, unwillingly fulfilling one of their numerous engagements, unsupported by her husband's presence.

Fritz, taciturn, and most discreet of valets, wondered, as he disrobed and attended to his master's comfort. The Doctor looked concerned. There was no possibility of setting the fractured arm, swollen and irritated by the long, jolting drive.

The Doctor ordered soothing lotions, said he would call in the morning, then departed.

Fritz looked curiously at the garments that had been worn by his master. Furtively the Captain watched, testily exclaiming—

“Pretty mess, ain't they? Rather a scarecrow get-up! Don't keep looking at them, but take them away and never let me see them again.”

Then he asked—

“What hour did Mrs. Devereux order the carriage?”

"Ten, sharp, sir, and here it is," answered Fritz, as he gathered the discarded garments in his arms and hastily retreated to the dressing-room as Mrs. Devereux came hurriedly in. With white face, startled eyes, and trembling lips, she cried—

"Oh! what has happened; tell me, love?"

"An accident in the last night's storm, some hours' exposure; but nothing really dangerous. Don't you see I'm safe, all but a broken arm."

Trembling, she sank on a chair.

"Poor little darling! I thought of you often last night, child; and did you dream of me?"

She turned her eyes, humid with unshed tears, and smiled feebly as she kissed him. His sound hand sought, found, and fondly pressed her shaking fingers, while he went on kindly—

"Now, darling, I'm a great big baby; pray, how do you mean to take care of me?"

Her only answer to this was to press her white face down on the pillow beside him. She was evidently unable to find words adequate to express her feelings, or to con-



trol her emotion sufficiently to answer him. He waited a few moments, then, kissing the little clinging, fingers, he whispered—

“Be a brave woman, and nurse your baby. Darling! darling! don’t take on so or you will make a fool of me. See, do you think you could put some lotion on my arm, it is burning again?”

Thus reminded of the necessity for action, she raised her sweet face, and went steadily and deftly to work.

For all the weary days her husband was confined to bed she proved a most efficient nurse, he a most amiable patient. It seemed as if they had gone back to their honeymooning, there was such perfect accord between them.

But, when the Captain’s arm was set, his strength renewed, he up and about, the ruthless irritability seemed to return. And as he grew stronger the face of his watchful nurse grew whiter.

Many friends called to enquire, and there was much kind sympathy felt and displayed for the Captain’s accident and Mrs. Devereux’s anxiety. The latter, people said, was

injuring herself with her close attendance on her husband, attendance which Miss Stuart-Moore, when she obtained admittance to her presence, assured her was ridiculously assiduous.

"My dear, he will never thank you for impairing your health on his behalf, and you are looking quite a ghost. Men *are* so stupid, they never see these things. I verily believe they are all purblind. But he will wake up some day, see you are a shadow, and then he will hate you. Do come out and try to get some colour in those thin cheeks."

Mrs. Devereux shook her head and murmured—

"I really cannot leave him."

"Pish! nonsense. Don't be a goose. He is not so ill that he cannot exist one hour without you. Give him a book to amuse him and come out with me. You must."

"No," emphatically.

"Fiddlesticks! Where is he? Let me have a talk with him. I'll make him turn you out; you really must have air. Unfortunately, these men creatures are always so self-absorbed they never think of anyone's

wants but their own. They always need a friend to jog their memory and quicken their observation."

Marie could not help herself; she laughed heartily, and, submitting to the kindly tyranny, allowed her friend to carry her off for a drive.

But, notwithstanding the affectionate endeavours of her friend, and the tender care of her husband—when that friend found opportunity to open his eyes to the thin cheeks and heavy eyes of his wife—as Captain Devereux increased in strength, Mrs. Devereux grew perceptibly weaker.

No fresh air, no drives, no rest seemed to benefit her. The cheeks grew more hollow, the eyes duller, and the spirits more depressed. Still she fought bravely, kept her sweetest smiles for her husband, and declared she would be all right presently.

He watched her anxiously, consulted the doctors.

At last, alarmed at her state, he determined to take her to Rendelsholme; change of air, and the care of his mother was, he thought, desirable. By the end of February

they arrived at home. Tenants turned out to welcome them; bonfires blazed in their honour; stout October was drunk, and great orations made, dilating on their virtues, singing the praises of their predecessors, and hinting at improvements needed. Marie was completely overcome by this reception, and was unable to appear with her husband, as he stood bareheaded addressing the crowd from the door-step. He looked proud, but flurried; he spoke shortly, thanking them kindly for the interest they evinced for Mrs. Devereux and himself.

Then he shook hands with those nearest to him, and retired with his proud mother, who kissed him as she whispered—

“Thank God, my son, that I have lived to see this day—Rendelsholme welcoming home the master.”

Silently he received her caress, and hurried to Marie, who, half sobbing, half laughing, was watching from her window the long string of tenants streaming down the avenue.

One grey-haired tenant muttered to his neighbour as he left—

“I’d rather the Captain had called her *wife*.”

I like the word, a fine, respectable Christian sound. Wife, wife—Mrs. Devereux, indeed! If it had been Lord Rendelsholme he'd have called the lady wife, I swear. It was a tarnation pity *this one* came inside *he*. Eh! Bill, that's how the old lord would have had it go. And the right way, too; the title, the estate, and the wife, all in the one bundle. No luck will ever come of dividing them."

Mrs. Devereux the elder's exultation was complete now she had her children at home. She gloried in her son. She took pride and pleasure in, and much solicitous care of her daughter, and the poor child clung to her.

The shock she had had, and the care she had taken of her husband, with many other unnamed anxieties, had told on her delicate nerves. She was carefully soothed, lovingly nursed, for, in the early summer, a baby was expected.

Now, for the first time, Captain Devereux was actual master at Rendelsholme, and, after the first few days which he devoted to following his wife's footsteps, he set about the duties of his position.

Rogers and Freeze were outwardly grati-

fied, inwardly jealous, when he visited and showed interest in their several departments.

Freeze shrugged his stolid old shoulders and growled; the yearlings were pretty fair; a tidy lot; nothing out of the common; he didn't know that they'd do much; he'd given up hoping. He then suggested such and such things should be done, and received *carte blanche* from his master, who complimented him on his successes with The Duchess, and encouraged him as to his hopes for The Duke and the Derby.

Rogers, more garrulous, responded to the interest Captain Devereux displayed, and talked with pride of expected triumphs at the approaching Warwick races, where he anticipated brilliant successes. Also he confided his visions of a red-letter season, to be crowned with the *ignus fatuus* "blue ribbon," and, on the whole, seemed quite reconciled to the matrimonial alliance his young lady had made, to have ceased his lamentations for the master he had hoped to have had placed over him—Lord Rendels-holme, and to be quite content with "the powers that were."

## CHAPTER XI.

### WARWICK RACES.

THE March winds had not ordered their courses, as, according to the old saw, it is their fitting duty to do. True, they had come in like a lion, but, alas! they omitted to go out like a lamb; and even now, though the first week of April had come and gone, the lion winds had not compressed themselves into the proverbial and hoped-for young sheep skin.

The winds were not quite so boisterous as they had been six weeks ago, but still they stung keen and bitter, cutting satirically at the mis-called sweet and modest spring.

No retiring modesty was there in the blaze of sunshine that glared down on the Warwick Spring Meeting, offensively betraying the parched skins and many-wrinkled crows-feet, into which the searching wind ground the clouds of dust, as men met for their pleasure, in the pursuit of which they

cheerfully encountered much physical torture from the unsympathising elements.

Men looked blue, thin, starved, as they bustled about, buttoned to the chin in their overcoats, or stood quiescently pouring spirits down to keep their spirits up, "book-ing" their bets and criticising the various quadrupeds who, despite much sheeting and tender care on the part of their attendants, looked nearly as uncomfortable as their biped fellow-sufferers. The bitter, harsh wind had shrivelled and drawn them up. Their coats, which ought to have looked sleek and glossy, would stand out and stare like bristles as they came out into the blazing sunshine.

The ground was parched and hard; the general appearance of the quaint old town, withered, dead; even the stately Castle looked bleak and cold and grey, as it kept grim guard on the banks of the Avon, surrounded by its army of gaunt skeletons, whose dead bones rattled as they shivered in the blast. One could scarcely believe that all these gleaming, naked limbs will, in a few short weeks, be covered with a rich, soft, green mantle of bounteous summer's pro-



viding, which will transform their weird forms into living things of sweet refreshing beauty. Oh! mystery of mysteries, *where does* Nature procure her summer garments, which year after year renew themselves, so fresh, so beautiful, so perfect, and that kind summer throws with such prodigal hand over the ungrateful earth.

The busy men who swarmed about wasted no pity on the present bare nakedness of their winter-stripped surroundings, or placed a thought on what their future coverings of beauty would be; neither did they *see* the red noses, blue noses, chattering teeth, or even notice the many voiceless voices that refused to obey their owners on that withering day. No, they were too absorbed, their whole souls were devoted to the one thing, the vain effort to decide how the weather would affect the running.

The course was smooth as a billiard table, hard as a drum. Here, light heels would be of most avail—might beat courage, endurance, strength, and other noble qualities. For the lighter the horse and the lighter the weight, the easier the pair would skim over the iron ground.

The "Trial Stakes" is, of course, the great feature of the day; about it anticipations are various, and speculation hazy. For, Sir J— T—'s "Tom-boy," who had been highly tried, had no sooner been pulled-up, than the news had been flashed east, west, north and south, by the astute watchers. It was a "good thing," therefore backers backed, prophets prophesied, and—the pen had been run through the colt's name at the last moment.

So much for touts, their employers, and alas! their poor dupes. Here was a pretty fix, six to four on a horse when the owner would like at least five to one. With the colt scratched, the sporting world felt as if they had had a cold bath. Metaphorically they were thrown completely on their haunches, utterly foiled; and the many unhappy sufferers had not even the benefit of clergy.

Wild rushes were made to redeem fortunes on "Snowflake" and "Wood Pigeon." The former had acquitted himself splendidly in his trial on Tuesday, and the latter was well spoken of, and looked "fit as a fiddle;" both were great favourites as the important hour drew near.

Curiously enough, the public scarce took the trouble to look at the Rendelsholme *débütant*. Somehow the Rendelsholme stables, in spite of their recent victories, were not held of much account ; one would have thought the last year's St. Leger would have made "the ring" look alive, and keep their eye open for future possibilities from that quarter.

The *cognescenti* were perversely blind, and chose to consider the unforeseen event, which had cleverly landed stakes to the amount of £6,500 in the Rendelsholme stables, a "freak of fortune," not a precedent for future triumphs.

The amusements of the day commenced with the Warwickshire Stakes, for which there was a large entry ; of the twenty entered, twelve started for the race. Of these, Lord Spencer's Peacock was, up to the last moment, first favourite ; Sir J—T—'s Cabul second, no one but his own county folk bestowing a thought on the very plain-looking colt, St. Servan, against whom ten to one was predicted. "The talent" had no belief in him, and his owners had kept

his performances pretty dark. Therefore it was a fresh bite when the Rendelsholme colt ran game and cut the favourite down. It was a pretty race.

From the first St. Servan had stole through his horses, dropping them one after the other; till finally he collared and challenged Peacock, who made a desperate struggle to win, but was hopelessly beaten ere they passed the stand. The race was won by two lengths.

It was a pleasure to hear the roar that issued from the Warwickshire throats, as the home bred and home trained horse came in first.

The winner was no beauty to look at, but certainly a good 'un to go. He was a medium sized, ugly brown colt, 15-2 at the most, with ragged hips and an unsightly width between his hind legs. Notwithstanding his ugliness, however, all admitted he was an uncommon clever brute; that his manners were perfect, and that he had finished like an accomplished racer. Again Rendelsholme scored.

The public had a "facer," and it behoved them to look out.

The public excitement reached its climax

when, later on, "The Trial Stakes" stood next upon the card. As for this, old Rogers had another *débütant*, The Duke, own brother to the Duchess. Despite the searching wind men's veins are throbbing feverishly, and many a heart sinks as the Warwickshire folk talk confidently of another Rendelsholme victory.

The Duke, like his successful sister, is a well shaped handsome animal—a blood bay—who wears a white stocking on one hind leg, and a blaze of white across his face. What a shoulder—what a girth, what elegantly turned quarters—one cannot help but admire him as he steps out gingerly through the crowd.

Captain Devereux eagerly talking to old Rogers, and in the highest spirits, follows him out from the enclosure. He has his foot on the first step, preparing to mount the stand, when a shabby-looking man addresses him. The man looks half ashamed, and whole afraid as he cautiously taps him on the shoulder.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Tredgar, sir—" the Captain turned round sharp, and faced

an undersized poor looking mechanic or tradesman, who apologetically continued—"I am very sorry to interrupt you, but Winny would have me come—." Here the Captain drew back from his prominent position into the comparative shelter of the seething mob. "She would have come herself, sir, if I had refused."

"Winny! what! *who* did you say?" gasped the Captain, staring with wild open eyes at the man who stammered uncomfortably as he replied—

"Winny—Winny Sullivan, sir, that was, I mean—that is not her name now, she says; she is here—and is in an awful way to speak to Mr. Tredgar. The poor girl is quite distraught. Indeed, sir, I do not think she knows what she is saying half her time, she is that far gone with grief and trouble."

"Winny Sullivan! Winny Sullivan! Good God! what does she want? I cannot see her here."

The Captain spoke in a thick voice impatiently, evidently puzzled and troubled, and his face was very white—perhaps *that* was the cold wind.

It was rather provoking! *the* race of the day, the one in which he was most interested, was now running, and he was kept talking to a low coarse fellow, apparently a shoemaker or tinker.

In a moment his county friends would be surrounding him—congratulating or condoling, for he had made many gay bets on this special event. How was he to shake off the man's importunities, or avoid meeting this poor woman, whom for months he had accustomed himself to think of as dead.

"What does she want?" he again impatiently enquired.

"That is not for me to say. I do not rightly understand. Winny, poor girl, is over there—" he pointed to the crowd—"will you come to her?"

"Not now—not now. I cannot."

"The poor soul has had a weary time—she is almost spent out. When she saw you in the Paddock, she gave a great screech, and dropped like a stone. Then she sobbed like a mad thing as she is—the wife had much ado to keep her, as she wanted to force her way in to you. I quieted her by saying I

would come myself. Will you see her or not? What answer am I to take the poor dazed thing. Will you come?"

"*Now?* Impossible. I'll see her later; for God's sake keep her quiet, take her out of this. Put her somewhere and say I will come presently—say anything—do anything. There, there, go quick, do you understand?"

"Where will you come to?"

"I'll meet you at the Pewter Pot in less than two hours. Now, in heaven's name be off." He was in an agony of impatience.

Here the exultant shouts of the populace declared that a Warwickshire horse had again won the victory. In a moment, dozens of hands were stretched out, and a score of voices congratulated Captain Devereux on his second triumph.

His face was white as he shook the hands proffered to him. He scarcely seemed to hear or understand what was said as he mechanically followed the horse, surrounded by his friends, to see the unsaddling. There was a vacant look in his eye as he absently stroked the colt's neck, and he scarcely spoke a word in reply to all their open-mouthed congratulations.



"By Jove! rum cove he is. He must have plunged wildly to be so overcome at his good fortune," laughed one.

"It is a new phase of existence, but I did not think the Captain was so raw as to let trifles disturb him," answered the other.

"If winning *the trifle* upsets him so, it is deuced good luck for him things went as they did—and really I did think Peacock would have pounded him. Didn't you? it was by the merest chance I hedged that 'monkey.' I say I'm awfully dry—come let us have a drink."

"Devereux is so moonstruck he won't look at us," chimed in a third, "or we might ask him to join in a bumper to the Duke's health. Eh! Fitzclare?"

So laughingly remarked and spoke the Captain's intimates as they carelessly lounged off, leaving him busy with the horse, apparently overcome with his series of triumphs.

A couple of hours later a solitary figure found its way along the banks of the dark flowing Avon. There was little triumph in the grey face and hunted eyes that looked furtively on every side as he strode along.

turning abruptly from the river to plunge into a narrow street—one of those queer dark, God-forgotten slums, the sad refuge of the neediest poor, up which he hastily went, to the one bright spot in the grimy surroundings, the public house that stood invitingly at the corner.

Alas! its doors never stay shut. They open and close spasmodically with constant and irregular swing, engulfing into its gorged maw the old, the young, the threadbare, the ragged; swaggering blusterers, slinking cowards, sleek looking rascals, hawk-eyed rogues, smooth, half-frightened boys, drivilling dotage, trembling age, hideous unsexed brawling hags, women who had once been innocent and fair, now stamped with brazen sin; girls, poor sad souls, whose troubles have left them no joy but this, and maddened beings who have long out-lived the pleasures of sin, and who seek here to drown their suffering of soul and body, in the oblivion of the devil's own providing—drink.

The public house is an omnivorous monster. Rich, poor, old, young, men and women, are

all food when they come to its net, on which it thrives and fattens, whilst they starve! They are never parted with by the great cruel monster, till from his rapacious jaws they are thrown out into the cold world, dry bones, clean picked.

The Pewter Pot, is a very fourth, nay a fifth rate den, standing corner ways between this *cul de sac* of a back slum, a somewhat more respectable mews, where many grooms and stablemen congregate, and where occasionally men of a better sort appear. But, rarely indeed are men of Captain Devereux's appearance seen in this locality. He eschews the mews and walks quickly up the side slum.

There is a man loitering, waiting outside, resisting the persuasive sounds and alluring scent that exudes from the Pewter Pot.

He looks quite respectable in this disreputable neighbourhood; and Captain Devereux looks at him twice, doubtful of his identity, before he signs to him to join him; then he turns, and they both walk quickly towards the river.

The stranger is an honest looking man,

with a broad freckled face, and stolid expression.

When they are clear of the houses Captain Devereux faces round.

"Now my man, where is she? and, who are you?"

"I'm Elias Crutch—married on Winny's half-sister—she is ben our house."

"How long is she with you, and where did she come from?"—quick, short and decisive came the queries.

"She came after Christmas—walked in one snowing night, carrying her poor little bundle." There was much pathos in the laconic replies of Mr. Elias Crutch; he evidently was not drawing out his tale to excite compassion.

"But where did she come from? What had she been doing?"

"That's more than I can tell, for myself does not know. She says she was looking for her husband; that last year she was harvesting and lost her health; went to hospital, and has been on the tramp ever since. It sounds a queer story. I can't make out the rights of it. Peg is as ignorant

as myself, and she's a shrewd wench, that she is. We think the girl is clean daft, and we know she is not long for this world, so we strive to do our best to keep the poor soul quiet."

"Where is her husband? Has she heard of him—or—found him?"

The Captain asked this last question in an awed tone of voice.

"No," answered the man, looking up curiously. "And though it's a shame to say it of an honest girl, who was brought up decently and wears a ring on her wedding finger, I begin to fear there is no husband at all. Some cold-blooded villain has deceived the poor girl."

The Captain made no answer to this, and the two walked on silently a few paces. Then Crutch continued airing his thoughts, evidently pleased at a chance of unburdening them—

"You see, it is ten years since I was quartered in Cork and married my Peg. Then Winny was the prettiest child I ever seed—the pride of the village and the darling of her old father. I know when the old man

died he left her a tidy bit of money ; and Pat was the boy who was sure to keep a comfortable roof over her head. He was as proud of the child as the old man himself. The wife and I have been in India ever since, until I got my discharge two years ago and came home to Warwick. We are no scholars ; no more are they. None of us can write ; but the wife sent word through a friend to say we were here. We never heard tell of them till the white-faced creature, Winny, walked in. She keeps wandering about. We cannot make her out at all. She don't speak out ; but we see she is sick and suffering, and the creature is always moaning. I do not believe any man, that was a man and a husband, would leave a handsome young thing like Winny to beg through the world alone. Poor soul ! she is not fit to rough it. Quite above her station, like a lady in her ways. Whoever and whatever he was, he was a hard-hearted brute to treat the child like that. The trouble has fairly killed our poor Winny. It is easy to see she has not long to live."

"Is it far?" asked the Captain, and

despite the keen east wind and the closing chill of nightfall, he wiped the dew off his face.

The tale was certainly very piteous.

"Well, indeed, sir, it is a good bit—quite the other side of the bridge. I feel quite ashamed of taking you so far. But Winny was so weak, I sent them home two hours ago, and I'm thinking the child will be fretting till we come."

In a quarter of an hour more they reached a poor little cottage. Its little spare garden in front was bare, and scalded, and ghastly; drawn up leafless willows kept guard all around, and covered the ground down to the river bank, not twenty yards distant.

Here the two men entered.

Two miles away was the busy race course, where laughing comments were passed on Captain Devereux's unexpected absence. "He has run home to tell his wife of his success." "Good boy! gone home early." "Not he! Tell you he has gone to the Regent to order a swell dinner for us all." Any, every reason but the true one was suggested as the cause of his sudden disappearance.

When the *Sporting Times* published the following, amongst other racing items, not a soul knew that the envied owner of the successful winner was hidden in a poor cottage on the banks of the Avon, eating his heart out with giant remorse.

The account of the Warwick Spring Meeting wound up thus—

“ We cannot help very warmly commending the game winner of the Warwickshire Stakes. Unpretending, even ugly at rest, when he stretches to his work he is a racer all over. He goes northward next week, where it will go hard with his enemies, we think.

“ Peacock’s supporters build somewhat on the idea that he was not judiciously handled—that he overpowered his jockey, and, guided by other hands, could do the trick. Be this as it may, like many other colts of good repute he failed signally when ‘asked the question,’ and there is no doubt on our mind that St. Servan had the command of him from end to end, and made very pretty and smart work of the finish.

The Duke is a picture, and much fancied



by the ring. Everything, however, is obscure about the Derby. The keen winds seem to have frozen the racing world. Betting is quite knocked out of time. Plungers seem to be completely cleaned out. The old 'uns are dead, or gone to sleep; and the young 'uns are supernaturally cautious. Business never was so sticky.

“It is said, however, that Osborne will ride The Duke; Ashe and French will be on Snow-flake and Wood Pigeon respectively, when the Derby bell rings. This is all the information I can at present give.”

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE COTTAGE BY THE AVON.

WHEN the two men entered the cottage they were greeted with a—

“Hush-sh-sh-sh !”

From the dusky interior a woman advanced to meet them. She was middle-aged, comely, with handsome black eyes, and a swarthy Spanish colouring. She held her finger up warningly and spoke very low, but the liquid sound of the southern Irish brogue was sufficiently distinct to proclaim her nationality.

“Hush-sh-sh ! She’s asleep, I tell yees.” Then she curtsied to the gentleman, and as she continued speaking, she turned alternately from one to the other. “She was that wake, I thought I’d never get her home. Indeed, then, yeer honour, it’s myself is obliged to yees for comin’ all this way. Faix, it’s not every jintleman would put hisself out of his road to oblige a dyin’ girl. An’ dyin’ she is, as sure as my name is Peg Crutch.

God save her soul ! poor daft body, she has nuffin left to live for. It's a sore sight to see her sick and suffering, and her man gone away from her. My curse down on him wherever he is—the wicked baste ! Oh ! it is a sad story, yer honour. She was the likely handsome slip of a girleen when I left her with the poor old father down in Kinsale. I never thought to see her come to this. But what am I sain ? What is the use of talkin', when I don't know the rights of the story at all, at all, or who, or where the bloody villain is. But won't yer honour take a sate ? Elias, my man, poke up the fire a bit. Yeess must be starved with the cowl'd, and it is myself is so flurried, I don't know what I'm doin'. As I said before, I thought we'd never reach the house ; the life was frightened out of me till I got her on the bed. Then I sent the child runnen for granny. She moaned and she groaned so, I thought we'd never have help soon enough, for sure enough her time is up. But, glory be to God, the sleep came and the poor lamb is quiet now. She's bate out intirely."

The men had listened while Mrs. Crutch.

talked on. Now she paused for breath, and Elias broke in—

“Lord save us! is she that bad? Then she can’t see the gentleman; his trouble is all for nothing.”

The Captain had dropped on a chair by the fire at which he stared without speaking.

“I’m not so sure about *that*, if his honour will only be good enough to wait. Winny set great store on seein’ him, and her last words before she dropt off was, ‘Peg, wake me the moment he come.’ I haven’t the heart to do that, the craythur will wake soon enough for what’s before her. But sure yer honour will wait a bit, if yer goes widout her seein’ yers it will be the death of her.”

“I’ll wait all night, if necessary,” mumbled the Captain.

“God bless yers for a kind-hearted jintleman, its aisy to know the rale quality—it’s long before a half, sir, would say that same, or sit as quiet there by a poor man’s hearth waytin’ to say a kind word to plase a poor half-daft body that’s a goin’ to glory.”

“Are you sure she is dying? Is there no hope?”

"Sartin' sure," said the woman, shaking her head sadly. "She is that far gone in the waistin'. Sumpshun the docthor calls it, I hardly thought she could hould out till her time was up."

"Till her what? I don't understand."

"In course yer don't—how should yer honour—but I thought the waistin' would take her off before her baby was born."

"Baby! what! do you mean to say she has a child," gasped the captain breathlessly, while a red flush dyed his face to the very roots of his hair.

"She has no baby *yet*, but, plase God, the craythur will have one before the night is over, and I'm afraid she'll not live through it."

"God help us, poor Winny!" involuntarily escaped from the Captain's lips.

"Glory be to God! ye may well say that, its a quare world—" What more Mrs. Crutch was about to add is lost to this history, as here a low moan from the inner room, was followed by a query—

"Peg, has he come?"

Peg' hastily disappeared into the inner room.

"Did I hear his voice? Tell me is Mr. Tredgar there, or am I dreaming?" gasped the girl breathlessly, as her sister bustled in.

"Whist! whist! asthore, he's there safe enough, a nice, pleasant jintleman he is too. He'll wait a bit; wait till yer ready to see him, honey dear. Be aisey now or yu'll put yurself in a fever."

"I'm ready—quick, quick, send him in to me. Oh! Peg, Peg, don't hindher me," cried the girl raising herself up in the bed. "I *must* see him. I cannot-rest. I cannot die easy till I do."

"So you shall. I'm not goin' to hindher ye. Lie down, lie down, Achushla! yu'll kill yerself intirely, so ye will. I'll bring him in a minite. I only want to settle ye tidy and dacent a bit."

Winny lay back on her pillow.

What a lovely face she had.

Very thin, worn and hollow cheeked, ghastly now, except where two crimson spots burned on either cheek, but beautiful withal. Nothing could destroy the beauty of her lovely face, her sweet mouth, the quivering lips of which disclosed her perfect teeth, the

delicate, slightly piquant nose, the splendid dark, grey eyes shaded by drooping, black lashes, which looked out from under clean, pencilled brows; the wealth of black hair, long, smooth and glossy, which coiled round her head—Nature's ebon frame for the exquisite picture.

"There! now yus looks illigant. I'll pin the read shawl round yur throat, and then, Winny, dear, ye'll look fit for recavin' the finest jintleman in the land. Don't hurry yurself, darlint, or talk too much, rimimber what's afore ye. Sure his honour is that kind he'll come agin when yur trouble is over. Just say how do-yu-do to him to-night and lave him go."

"Oh! Peg, let him cum in—how do I know what I will do till I see him?" moaned the girl. "Its aisy talkin', but I can't lay aisy on my bed till I spake to him—there is that lying' on my heart that is smotherin' me intirely. For God's sake send him in; and, Peg, shut the door on us, for no one must hear our talk."

Peg kissed her.

"There! there! Asthore, keep quiet, and

“yur own Peg will do just as ye bids her. God save us and keep us from harm!”

With this quiet ejaculation on her lips she went out, went out, and with tears in her voice bid the gentleman go in.

“Now, yer honour, she’s ready. For the love of God stay as short a time as yu can, for I’m in mortal fear of what’s comin’.”

The Captain rose up. His tall, stalwart, grand height looked startling in that poor little kitchen. His face was moved, awed, nervously frightened as he turned towards the inner room. Yet he was no coward. Still, he would rather ten thousand times have to face the enemys’ fire—the biggest gripe in England—the ugliest fall, than the poor girl dying in that inner room. And yet, he wanted to see her badly. He would not, if he could, avoid the meeting. Nay, more, if he had known where to seek her he would have sought and found her long ago.

Now, if any obstacles intervened to prevent their meeting, he was prepared to fight them out, to battle for his right—he would overcome, scatter them to the winds—for—speak to Winny he would, must, and should.



Another moment and they were face to face. He greeted her.

"Winny! my poor girl! are you come to this?" He looked at her very sadly.

And she?

She hid her face in the bed-clothes and gasped and sobbed hysterically as, Mrs. Crutch, faithful to her promise, closed the door on them.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### WINNY.

AN hour elapsed—two.

Then the door of the inner room opened. Captain Devereux came out, with an awed, frightened face, and said, hoarsely—

“Go in, go in quick, Mrs. Crutch. I’m afraid the poor soul is dying.”

Then he walked straight out into the cold bitter night—walked out bareheaded as he had come from the girl’s bedside.

For a time he strode rapidly up and down the small stretch of walk; then by degrees his pace moderated, and grew slower and slower, as his face, which had been storm-tossed, settled into deep thought. Then meditatively he paced, for a weary length of time.

No one came near him as, like a soldier on guard, he paced up and down, up and down the narrow space between the cottage and the river.

While the man paced outside, inside, on the poor bed, lay Winny—Winny in the throes of child-birth, and with the shadows of death closing round her.

Poor girl! the dark death-shadow brought no still calm with it. It did not obliterate sad memories, or dim bitter sorrows. On the contrary, it intensified all her feelings; and, in that dread hour, her whole past stood out with startling vividness.

The early fear, the sweet love, the calm happiness; then, the awful dread, the cruel trial, the horrible doubt, and the one faint hope that had helped her, were very present with her, adding fearful mental suffering to her body's mortal anguish.

At last—

A son was born to her.

Alas! poor mother! there was no happy rush of joyous, proud maternity to assuage her anguish as they told her a man-child was born into the world.

No, happiness was not for her; though her heart did throb passionately, wildly, and a new strange feeling moved her terribly, as she asked to see her child; she was *not glad*,

though she was much moved ; and, as her sister held it to her, she kissed it, kissed it passionately, while she wailed feebly—

“ My baby ! my baby ! my poor little baby ; you’ll never know your mother.”

Then with a great effort she calmed herself.

It was fearful to see her struggles for breath as she fought with her terrible weakness, and lay back, still, for a short space.

A feeble cough now and again shook her weak frame, and the handkerchief with which she wiped her lips was stained with blood.

The two women watching saw the end was coming very near.

Peg’s eyes were full of tears as she bent over her dying sister.

“ Acushla ! acushla ! is there anything in the wide world yer own Peg can do for yees ? Sure ye knows it’s my heart’s blood I’d give for yees this night. Is it the priest yee want ? and sure, if it is, there’s Elias will run for him at wanst, though myself does not think that same is of much use. Will yees have him, my heart ? ”

Winnie shook her head in negation.

“Well, then, what is it? Is it the child is on your mind? Rest aisy about that. It’s myself will be a mother to it; I’ll thrate it as if it was my own. Elias will never say agin it; he’ll be a father to it, that he will—honest, dacent, quiet man that he is, thank God! Never fear, dear, it’s he that has the good heart—not like the cruel villain that brought you to this, and left you to die, my lamb.”

“Whist! whist! Peg, don’t say that; it’s my own doin’. It’s not his fault at all, at all. He didn’t know.”

“Glory be to God! didn’t know. Who is he? And what’s your fault? Winny, dear, yeer dyin’; tell your own sisther the truth afore yee goes. Don’t lave a slur upon yer name when yee goes to yer God if yees can help it—the dacent, honest name of Sullivan. Child! child! I don’t think, and I won’t belave yees a wilful sinner; there must be a cruel mistake somewhere. For God’s sake, what is it?”

Winny lay very still, gathering her forces. Then a faint colour tinged her ashen cheek as she faintly whispered—

“Peg, is he there still? Is Mr. Tredgar outside?”

“Sure no, honey! What would make him? He’s gone long ago,” answered Peg; “but don’t be thinkin’ of him now, or of anythin’ or any one that will disturb your poor mind. Say an *Ave Mary*, or a prayer, honey, and the good God will take you aisy. Sure it is goin’ to Himself yee are, and that quickly. Lord save us from harm. It is myself would have liked to have had the priest to yees, child; but it is too late now. Maybe if you say, ‘Jesus, Mary and Joseph,’ it will do yees good. Do yees rimimber, darlint—

Blessed be Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my heart, my life and my soul—

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, assist me always, and in my last agony;

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, receive my last breath.

AMEN.\*

That will help yees a bit. Say it, my lamb. Myself rimimbers the time I would not get aisy out of my bed if I hadn’t crossed myself and said the words for the sake of

\* An actual prayer used in Ireland.

some of the poor solws suppin' sorrow in purgathory; and sure the same holy words will be useful to us now to keep your poor soul aisy on its journey. There now, that is nice. Shut your eyes and lie straight. We won't let yees out of the world with a crooked body any way. Oh! it's myself is the sorrowful woman this night. O, Alana! O, Alana!"

Peg, honest soul, lifted up her voice and wept, rocking herself to and fro as she did so.

A low voice broke in on her sorrow—

"Peg, don't take on so, darlint. Yee wur a good sisther to me; and it is good fur me I'es goin'. It has been a hard world to me here; but—but I must see him agin. Are yees sure Mr. Tredgar is gone?"

"Certain sure, asthore!" reiterated Peg, a little surprised at the repetition of her sister's question.

"Gone! I don't believe it. He'd never leave me to die like this! Oh! Holy Mother of God, give me strength. I must see him again. Run, Peg, run quick and send for him," cried the girl.

She was wildly excited, her face all eyes—great, staring, frightened, grey eyes, and she gasped fearfully.

“Lie still ; for the sake of the dear Virgin lie still. Oh ! my lamb ! my lamb ! I’ll see for him this minnit ; perhaps he’s not gone afther all, though what would keep the jintleman waitin’ all these hours it’s myself does not know. There ! there ! be aisy, honey, and I’ll go look for him.”

“Go ! go ! or you’ll kill me,” groaned Winny.

Mrs. Crutch hurried to the kitchen ; her eyes were streaming with tears, and there, much to her surprise, she found two men sitting, one on either side of the fire. The last time she had been in the kitchen her husband had been alone ; now there was a second person, who, much to her astonishment, and greatly to her relief, proved to be Mr. Tredgar.

“Thank God ! yer honour’s there ; the poor girl is goin’ fast. She’s lavin’ us a beautiful boy ; but it’s a sore sight to see her goin’,” sobbed Mrs. Crutch, with an apron to her eyes. “It’s a cruel thing to ask a jintle-



man like yee; but herself says she can't die aisy till she sees you agin. Would yee be afther goin' in till her? Sure it's a rale Christian yee must be, watin' there as if yees were one of ourselves to see what yer can do to help our thruble. The Lord reward yees for your goodness; it is but little comfort yees can give, but thank yees kindly all the same."

"Is she—is she much worse?" he asked.

"She's had as bad can be—just off, poor sowl," was the sorrowful reply.

Captain Devereux stood up, sighing wearily, with a sad quiet in the face that was generally so passionate and impulsive. Death has a most sobering influence, even on the most careless.

"There is someone in there," he remarked.

"I'd rather speak to Winny alone."

"In course; it's only old mother. I'll bring her out. Sure, it's yourself that's considerate for the poor."

So saying, Mrs. Crutch disappeared. In a few seconds she returned, bringing old Mrs. Crutch with her. Then the Captain went in, and again the door was closed. This time

Winny kept her eyes fixed on him as he advanced to the bed. By her side lay her little baby, a very fine child, who had sapped all the strength into his young being from the mother who lay dying. The man looked with sad eyes from the mother to the child. As he did so, she wailed—

“Poor child! *What* is to become of it?”

“I’ll take it, Winny. It shall never want; you may trust me.” He spoke very low—sadly, but determinately.

“*You!* will you really? Oh! how good you are,” gasped she.

“Not good, Winny, but—”

“Oh! no buts—you *are* good. I know it; bether a dale than I deserve. May I tell Peg?”

A deep flush came into his face. He hesitated a moment. Then he stooped down and kissed the little baby, murmuring very low as he rose up again—

“Tell her what?”

“The truth.”

“I wish to God we could—but *what* is the truth?” he cried, passionately; “I’d give half I possess to know.”

"Tell her what we know."

"You may tell her what you know, if you like," He put a slight stress on the *you*.

"And you'll tell her it's thruth," joyfully whispered Winny.

He bowed his head.

"Oh! thanks be to the Holy Virgin for all her mercy. I'll die aisy now. Peg will know I am no sinner—only a poor wake, foolish girl. Call her—call her quick. I'll die happy when she knows I'm not wicked."

He went to the door and beckoned Mrs. Crutch in.

Then Winny began her tale—told it with many pauses and scant breath, growing every moment weaker.

He sat by the bed, with bowed head, listening, nodding his head now and again in confirmation of what she stated. But he never spoke; he let her tell her story her own way.

When it was finished, Mrs. Crutch's eyes were streaming, and, as she kissed her sister, she sobbed—

"Poor lamb! poor lamb! what you must have suffered; and, sure, it's an awful wicked world! God help us all!" Then she turned

to Mr. Tredgar, as Winny called him, and continued, "You are sure you wish to take the child, sir; because, if you have any doubt, leave it. Elias and I will do for it, never fear. Maybe—"

He held up his hand.

"Hush! she is off! I have promised *her*, and I'll keep my word."

The end was very near now; but she heard his words, and smiled a sweet smile. Winny's wasted face was illuminated with joy as she murmured—

"Kiss me for good-bye."

He stooped and pressed his lips upon her clammy forehead.

The next moment she lay dead.

An hour later, Captain Devereux walked hastily into Leamington, straight to the stables where his dog-cart waited; and, though it was four o'clock in the morning, he started at once for home. It was six when he arrived at Rendelsholme, and, strange to say, at that early hour the whole house seemed astir, and lights shone from many of the windows.

Alarmed, he jumped down, and, while the

groom drove round to the stable, he let himself in quietly with his latch key. Quickly he mounted the stairs, and made straight for his wife's room. He met no one on the way.

But, ere he turned the handle, the door opened, and his mother came out. Her face was frightened and anxious as she motioned him back. He was terrified as he asked—

“What is it?”

“Come with me, and I'll tell you.”

Dazed, and with horror-stricken face, he went with her.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### TEMPTATION.

MRS. DEVEREUX's room was close at hand; she opened the door and entered, her son following her. Then she smiled as she caught the horrified expression of his face, and spoke reassuring—

“Don't look so terrified. Marie is ill—prematurely, but we hope all will be well.”

“Oh! my Marie, my poor little darling! Is she dying?” gasped Captain Devereux, as he sank on a chair.

“Nonsense! no such thing,” said Mrs. Devereux, cheerily; “she is suffering, poor child, but Dr. Bell does not anticipate anything fatal. He and Fraser are with her now, and soon the worst will be over.”

“But how? I do not understand. I did not think we were to expect this so soon.”

“Neither did we, but she slipped on the terrace last evening, and this is the result. We thought it nothing at the time. She seemed a little nervous and shaken, so I

made her go to bed ; shortly after she was taken ill, and she has been suffering ever since."

"How unfortunate—provoking, also—that I should be away."

"Very unfortunate. We expected you every moment, or I should have sent for you. It is provoking you were so late. Marie asked for you several times. What kept you till this hour?"

"My poor little darling!" He sighed; then spoke very low and slow, "*This* kept me, mother."

Something in his face frightened and puzzled his mother. There was a look of pained, sad resolve, firm determination, quite different from the usual passionate, irritable, wayward expressions that were habitual to him, as he cautiously drew from his breast a bundle, which he had carried carefully cradled inside his loose overcoat. His hands shook as he produced the bundle, and his mother's face changed when he laid before her—a new-born child!

"Denzil! what is it? Oh! where did it come from? Why do you bring it here?"

She looked disgusted, mystified, frightened, angry, all in one, as she made her disjointed exclamations.

Then, in a low, sad voice, he told his story.

When he had finished, his mother's face had aged ten years, and there was a great horror in her eyes as she looked at the poor little atom of humanity that fortunately slept—slept, rolled in the poor red shawl that had been taken from its dead mother to cover it, laid on the couch where the Captain had placed it by the side of his mother. She wrung her hands, and groaned feebly—

“Oh, my son—my poor boy! *what is to become of us?*”

He looked at her sadly, and shook his head.

Next she questioned—

“What do you mean to do?”

“Tell Marie, of course,” said he, sadly.

“No, no; oh, no, you must not; it would be murder.” She looked piteously at him.

He sighed and answered dejectedly—

“So I fear. But what else can I do? *Now*, perhaps, it will not be so bad. Marie



loves me ; she will forgive, and perhaps we may be happy yet."

"*Now*, indeed, it would be the deed of a madman to tell her. Remember all that is at stake."

"As if I could forget. I'am neither stock nor a stone. I tell you, mother, it has been gnawing at my heart all these weary months, till it has made me almost mad. I, who would give my life for her, to have brought this horror into this sweet child's life. If only I could bear it all myself!" He sighed deeply.

"My poor boy, listen to me." He looked at her with dull apathy. "Be a man. You cannot undo what is done. *Now*, there is no need to tell. The secret lies between you and I—let us keep it."

She spoke very low, and looked ashamed of what she had suggested.

"Oh, mother, how could I? Just think of our child—the little child that is even now being born into this weary world. Think of it. Look at this," he pointed to the sleeping babe on the sofa, "and remember what it all means. It is an awful thing to tell my Marie,

worse still to keep it secret. I do not see how I could continue to deceive; *this* interferes." He pointed to the sleeping child. "I cannot avoid telling her, though I wish to God I had died ere I brought this trouble on my poor little darling."

"If you don't tell, who will ever know? And as to this," she looked angry, "why did you bring it here? You must send it away. I'll take care of that."

"No. I promised to keep it. Mother, mother, don't tempt me. I am a sorely tried man."

"You are mad, mad, mad," she broke out passionately. "Oh! my dear son, listen to me. Marie is your wife; why break her heart about what is past mending? She loves you dearly. It is too late now to tell the truth. Trust me, my son. Let me manage about this; I'll send the child away. I'll see it is well cared for—you need have no fear on that head—no harm shall come to it, I promise. Think of Marie, of the child—your wife and child. Oh! my son, take your mother's advice."

"I took it once before, mother—see how

it has worked." He was very gloomy as he went on in a low monotone—"I have thought of everything—thought till I can think no more, till reason has tottered on its throne. My life, that ought to have been so smooth, happy, and blessed, has been one hell all these months. While there was a doubt I bore it silently—there was some excuse for my living lie. Now that I know, I must tell her. Oh! God, it will break her heart—kill my little Marie, I fear—and yet, what else is left for me to do?"

He bowed his head on his clasped hands to hide his bitter anguish.

"Just so. Break her heart and all for—nothing. After all, what do you know? You are as far now from knowing the truth as ever you were. There is no way of establishing or proving what you fear. Why put a doubt in her mind to disturb her happy life? There is no remedy for the mischief already done but for you to go on bearing to the end."

"No remedy? Alas! for the past. And the future? It's awful to think of. How is a man to be happy with a secret like that on his soul?"

Here a knock came to the door, and Mrs. Devereux, frightened for fear of intrusion, went to it quickly.

Fraser, young Mrs. Devereux's own old nurse, now a confidential servant in the house, stood outside, with an important, pleased, half-frightened face; in her arms she held something—something rolled up in an Indian shawl. Through a mixture of smiles and tears she whispered—

“Oh! mam; will you take it, please? It's a boy, and I'm so pleased, though I have not had time to look at it yet. I must hurry back to my mistress. It is so awkward the nurse not being here, or anything ready, as it ought to be, to welcome the little gentleman. I could not trust the little heir to any one but yourself, mam. Here, please to take him; I'll come back as soon as ever I can.”

With this Fraser placed the bundle in Mrs. Devereux's arms and hurried away. She never saw into the bedroom, or knew her master was there.

Captain Devereux raised his head as his mother came back into the room; there was

a sad expectancy in his eye. Mrs. Devereux lifted the fold of the shawl, then let it fall; there were tears in her eyes as she met her son's, and she whispered—

“Poor little babe! it's dying. Oh! Denzil, what a pity.”

Then she sat with it in her arms, and looked with longing eyes on the other little bundle that lay by her side, where her son had first placed it.

Captain Devereux leant over and opened the shawl to look at his little son. Poor little feeble thing!—it was even then breathing its few faint gasps of existence away. With horrified eyes he watched till its feeble life went out. Then the mother and son gazed at one another. Presently she laid the dead child down, and whispered—

“Oh! Denzil, think of Marie; she will fret so for the child. Don't tell, don't tell—I'll settle it, and she'll never know.”

“How? I don't understand. What do you mean?”

“Send away the dead and keep the living child.”

“Mother! I could not.”

"But you must, you must. It is the only thing you can do. You take the dead baby back where you came from. They'll think it died of the cold. Go, quick, quick, before any one sees or knows, and I will manage here. No one will ever know."

Vehemently she persuaded, while with trembling hands she took the poor garments off the living child and put them on the dead. He watched her like a man in a dream.

"This is the turning point in your whole life: if Marie died; if there was no child—do what I say. It is best for all, and injures none." She spoke disjointedly but with fierce energy. "You must see this has made the way plain for us. Go, go at once."

"But no, no, no, I cannot—more deceit. Oh! mother, don't tempt me!"

"Tempt—no; but I entreat you to be wise, reasonable, be led by me who has your welfare most at heart. My poor boy, you are not capable of judging now—you are too bewildered—but the day will come when you will thank me for this. You must go now."

"But I will not—I cannot—the servants. It will be found out. I'll never get away,"

gasped the unhappy young man, looking helplessly at his mother.

She renewed her entreaties, ending—

“You do as I tell you, and there is no difficulty about it. You must do it for the sake of the suffering child in the other room; the truth, or even this one item,” pointing to the dead baby, “will surely kill her.”

Then he bowed his head, and said—

“As you will, mother. What must I do?”

“I’ll say you are going for another nurse, another doctor, and order the dog-cart at once. Wait here till I return.”

Mrs. Devereux went out hurriedly, and the man kept watch with the living and the dead baby.

In a very short time Mrs. Devereux returned, and whispered softly as she kissed her son—

“Now, my dear, all is ready—the dog-cart is at the door.”

“I must see Marie first,” said he doggedly.

“Impossible.”

“But I will—I must—”

“You must not—she is too ill—she must not know you are here. Go, go at once, or you will be too late. What you have to do must be done quickly.”

Then, buttoned up in his overcoat, his mother leading him, he went downstairs, and out into the cold raw morning. When he was seated in the dog-cart he asked for a glass of brandy. His mother handed it to him, saying aloud—

“Take William with you, and be sure to have a comfortable breakfast in Leamington. Be as quick as you can, for I shall be in an agony until you come back.”

Without a word he drove off—drove fast, for that cold thing lying so near his miserable heart felt heavier every moment, and he felt the weight was growing greater than he could bear. He must get rid of it, and that quickly.

It was ten o'clock in the morning when he reached the outskirts of Leamington. He pulled up with a jerk, threw the reins to his servant, saying hurriedly—

“You go direct for Dr. Schaker, then to



the Regent and order breakfast for me. I must see for a nurse here, and I shall get to the hotel as quickly as possible. Wash out the mare's mouth, feed her, for I will return home at once."

The man touched his hat, and drove away, and Captain Devereux strode rapidly down a side street.

An hour later he drove up to the Regent, and three hours after he was back at Rendelsholme, where good news awaited him. The proud young mother was impatiently longing to show him their little son.

## CHAPTER XV.

### CONTENT AT LAST.

How sweetly his wife welcomed him. How exquisite she looked in her new character of mother, lying on her soft pillows, with the baby by her side, waiting for him, waiting for him in a fever of expectation. How happy, proud, and exultant she was as she cried—

“God has been so good to me. I am so glad and so thankful. Is he not a beauty, and the image of you, love! I have been in a fever to show you our boy, but auntie would not let me see you before; and now she says I am not to talk, and that you are only to stay a moment—it is too bad!”

Captain Devereux stooped over and kissed his wife, while she feebly blinked her eyes to disperse the happy tears that would gather. He sat down beside her, took her little hand—the hand that bore her wedding ring—and soothed her with a few kind words. He did

not say much, there was no need ; but what he did say betokened that he shared her thankfulness and her joy. She was supremely happy, and thought that he was in one of his dearest moods as he sat there watching her. He sat on till his mother came and said he must leave, that Marie should be allowed to rest.

“This is the sweetest rest I can have, auntie,” smiled the young mother. “Let him stay, please ; I am so happy with my husband and my child—our beautiful boy. Isn’t he like his papa ?”

The elder lady smiled and nodded, but imperatively insisted on Captain Devereux’s departure.

“You really must go to sleep, love. Denzil can come again presently.”

Then Denzil rose to go, his wife whispering—

“Papa, don’t go without kissing your little son.”

He stooped over the little bundle whose identity was swallowed up in clouds of soft lace, and swathes of mysterious flannel, and kissed what he could see of the little mortal.

Then he kissed his wife; and there was a softened look on his face as he walked out of the room.

The young mother, contented and happy, speedily became convalescent. It was charming to watch her with the child. She was so delighted with her new treasure; so proud of *their* boy, fondly calling baby her greatest blessing—deeming that in him was found the missing chord—the want of which had made discord between her and her husband.

It was a pretty sight to see her with the two; she, fondling the baby, being caressed by the father—her adored husband—who every hour grew more thoughtful and considerate, more devoted to her and the child—*their* child, the precious darling who had accomplished all that her love had failed to do in satisfying the needs of her husband's nature.

No irritability now tried, or waywardness puzzled her; he was always loving and considerate; the dark shadows seemed to have vanished; she saw long years of happiness before them, and was sweetly contented; her only small vexation being, that, as he

was still in the service, they could not always be at Rendelsholme.

"Denzil, it is a shame to have to leave this; it looks so lovely. Why don't you leave the army?"

"I wish I could, but a man can't well sell out while the country is at war—patience little woman, it will soon be over."

"I don't know, one is hardly over before another horrid war begins; last year it was the Crimea, now these nasty Chinese."

"They are only a flash in the pan; I dare say it will be all over in a month or two. By the way, I wonder what possessed Rendelsholme to volunteer for China; such a queer start after all he had seen in the Crimea and suffered at Sebastopol. I can't understand his war fever. He was the last man in the world whom I would have expected to go out of his way in pursuit of it. But, I suppose, there is a latent germ of the wild beast in our nature; once a man sees blood he becomes insatiable, and is not content until he gorges himself. If it was I now there might be some reason in the madness, for I was always wild, restless, un-

tamed; while he was the quietest and least excitable of mortals—always going the even tenor of his way, fulfilling his duty, and not looking to the right hand or the left. It is too absurd of him. I have no patience with him. He is the last man in the world I would have anticipated rushing off to the antipodes in search of adventure.”

“I suppose he thinks it is his duty,” murmured Marie; “he is sure to do what he thinks—knows is right. He is very good.”

Marie gave a little sigh, at which her husband laughed amusedly, while he chaffed and mimicked her.

“Umph! he’s a paragon; *he* is very good—is he? Is that Quixotic adventurous spirit the sort of goodness you admire—rushing off and leaving all his duties? Shall I follow his footsteps, and ‘be good’ also? Shall I go volunteering, little one; go in search of medals, honours, and glories, to bring back and lay at your ladyship’s feet? Perhaps you would prize me more if I was minus an eye, a leg, an arm, or otherwise disabled; eh! little wife? Shall I go and win laurels too?”

"Oh! Denzil, no. It would be too dreadful! Surely you are not thinking of—wishing for it—it would never do for you to leave baby and—me; impossible!"

"I feel *it is* impossible. I was only in joke, my darling," he said, as he put his arm round her; "but, if it was not for *you*, there is nothing I should like better. I quite envy Den. all the honours he has won."

"Please be content with what you have; your son, and your little wife. I would be wretched if I thought you considered us a drag on you."

"Drag, dear! never. I glory in my possessions; and I mean to be contented with the duties that come to me; never fear, little wife! I won't go looking for wind-mills to fight; I am too happy at home. If I am ordered out, of course I'll have to go, but it will be with half a heart; for, darling, I would rather stay with you ten thousand times. Fortunately now duty only takes me to Cork. Will you and the young gentleman be fit to travel next week, or shall I run over alone, and leave you both here with granny?"

"Of course we go with you."

"No of course at all, love; you need not come unless you like; there is no necessity to drag you across the water. You and baby can take care of Rendelsholme, unless you really prefer coming."

"But of course I prefer. I wish to go. *You* are ten times more to me than Rendelsholme; you dear old fidget. Don't think to leave us behind; baby and I would be quite lost without papa to take care of us."

"Then papa will carry his treasures with him."

He stooped and kissed her. They were very happy.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### INDIA.

WHAT a happy summer time that was to the Devereuxs ; they were enjoying the "good measure, pressed down and running over," of sweet content. All was fair and bright ; no tiny cloud arose to dim their most distant horizon ; they were perfectly happy, resting in a dead calm, lapped on the broad bosom of satisfied fruition.

But, as the old adage prophecies, "before a storm comes a calm," and a whirlwind was blowing in the distance, a mighty tornado was gathering its strength to sweep with destruction on them and many others.

The first break in the serene sky of the Devereuxs came in this wise, in the usual routine of the service—

"We have got the route, darling."

"For where?"

"India."

"Oh! Denzil, must you go?"

"Well, yes ; I think so. I have just been talking to the Colonel about it."

"What does he say ?"

"That it is very provoking ; I can hardly send in my papers while these beastly Chinese are kicking up such a row, and that it is an awful sell being on the roaster for India. It is a horrid nuisance ; I scarcely know what is best to do."

"Sell out !" cried the wife, while the sapphire eyes looked wistfully from the baby on her knee to the husband who stood over and looked down on them.

"Not on the cards, I'm afraid, my pet," said he, as he shook his head. "Fortescue agrees that I ought to go."

"When must we move ?"

"October, I suppose ; the usual time for the foreign removes. Little woman, little woman, it will be an awful trial ; I do not know however I am to leave you."

"Oh ! Denzil, surely you will take me with you ?" entreated Marie.

"Bless your sweet face, no." He stooped and kissed her. "I could not possibly take you to that beastly climate. After an Indian

campaign you would be like a Strasburg goose—all liver—fit for nothing but a *païé*. You will have to stay at home and take care of the boy."

"Oh, my darling! I cannot let you go without me; I cannot, I cannot."

She looked dreadfully upset, and almost wept.

"But, love, baby would die without you. He wants you most."

"Perhaps so, poor little man; but, darling, I want you most, and I am sure you will want me—a little."

"More than a little, my love. I shall want you awfully every hour of every day," said he, fondly; "but our separation won't be for long. Seriously, I do not think it would be right to take my treasure with me."

She heaved a very deep sigh, as she murmured—

"Of course you know best, dearest." Then she lowered her eyes that he might not be distressed by the blinding tears that would rise. "If you say it is right for me to remain behind I'll try to bear it; but oh! my

“darling, the parting will be dreadful. I wish, I wish you had not to go. Is there no way of avoiding it?”

“Alas! I fear not. China is likely to be troublesome; we can do nothing there in the way of closing our accounts until the cold weather comes, then we will make short work of them. The moment there is peace I will come home to my little wife; you may swear I will not stay one hour longer than I can help from your ladyship,” said he, playfully, as he sat down by her and reasoned on the necessity of the case, did his best to cheer and reconcile her to the impending parting.

As usual, she submitted sweetly to his veto, and bore up bravely in his presence. In private her tears were many and bitter; how many and how bitter was only known to herself, her God, and her baby.

This was the first gloomy shadow that swept over their sunshiny paradise. A very few days and the thunder-clouds gathered thick and overshadowed their whole sky.

Scarcely a week had elapsed when Captain Devereux came again to his wife with more news. He found her with her baby on her

knee sitting by the open window in her pretty bright dressing-room.

He knelt down by her and folded his arms round her and the child, kissing them both gravely. There was a great tenderness in his manner, and a white, set look on his handsome face.

"What is it, love?" asked his wife, conscious that something moved him strangely.

"Awful news, my darling; there is mutiny in India."

"Why—what—how? I do not understand?"

He stroked her hair softly, as he went on in a sad, grave voice—

"Some of the native troops have rebelled against authority. The soldiers have risen and killed their officers—massacred them in cold blood; they have killed others, too, we are afraid; but the particulars are very scanty. The news has only just come by telegraph; it is awful."

"Terrible! Denzil, and you?" questioned she.

"Must go at once, poor darling!"

"How soon?" gasped she, again.

"A day or two at farthest. We only wait the arrival of the transport."

She laid her baby down and clasped her little hands round her husband's neck as he still knelt by her. He gathered her in his strong arms and tried to still her emotion as she sobbed—

"My love, my love, my love, must you go, must you leave me? How am I ever to bear it?"

"Alas! yes. Poor little wife, there is no doubt *now* as to what is right for me to do. We must part."

"Then you won't take me with you?"

"I could not, love, if I would; women are not allowed to go. My darling, India is no place for them now. I am thankful to think my treasure will be safe at home."

"Oh! Denzil, what shall I do without you! *What shall I do!*"

The poor child was utterly broken down, and wailed feebly.

"I have telegraphed for mother; she'll come at once. My darling, you will have to be brave; remember, you are a soldier's wife. You and she will have to comfort one

another ; and you have the baby. You must take care of each other and of him between you."

Very tender was Captain Devereux with his young wife ; long and earnest were the talks between them ; every moment he could snatch from his military duties were devoted to her. Her poor white face and brave eyes haunted him ; she was very calm, but the iron had entered into her soul, and an unnamed horror, a fearful dread of the future, was ever present with her.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hitherto conscience had slept with her husband as to the exchange of the dead for the living child. Now, conflicting doubts arose. He was ashamed of the cheat, and longed to undeceive his wife, yet dreaded to do so, when he saw the greedy way in which she smothered the unconscious babe to her bosom, and took comfort from the pressure of its tiny fingers.

It moved him strangely to see her cling for comfort to the baby, and to hear her inno-

cent confidences and troubles about "papa" poured into the boy's unconscious ears. Her talks to himself about their son were equally trying; sometimes he almost thought he must make a clean breast of it before he parted from her. Then he reconsidered. It would be too cruel to add to her trouble, when he must leave her to bear it alone. He would wait till he returned; then he would tell his wife the whole truth; he would be honest, confess all his deceits, and by the humbleness of his repentance win the forgiveness of his darling wife. When she heard all his suffering, and knew that the danger and the sin slept in one grave, she would accept his atonement, and be more his own than ever.

It was with a sad heart and plans for the future such as these that Captain Devereux finally parted from his wife.

His wife and his mother wept silent tears as they watched the transport sail, taking the first detachment of troops to India, there to revenge the slaughter of their countrymen, the violation, torture, and death of their fair countrywomen. Many sad, fearful hearts



watched that outgoing vessel, and many brave ones, equally sad, went out in her, having seen the last of wives, little ones, and loves.

Is it true that men must fight and women weep for ever?

The day after the —th sailed, fuller particulars of the disasters in India were published. Every item only added to the anxiety of the hearts that ached at home, and made every mother, wife, sister, and lover in the land fearful for their loved ones in India, or on the road thither.

Delhi was in a state of wild anarchy—men, women and children had been hacked to pieces, made one awful holocaust, whose blood cried to heaven for revenge.

A few bright instances of individual fidelity and self sacrifice stood out in bold relief amidst the sea of turpitude, ingratitude, and savage butchery. Servants had tried to save their masters and mistresses, but mostly failed in their endeavours, and lost their lives in the useless attempt.

The grief of the nation for her dead was profound; but, even grieving hearts felt

proud of our noble soldiers when they read of heroic deeds—of daring and self sacrifice such as the following record from Delhi—

“Lieutenant W—, finding it no longer possible to hold the magazine and arsenal, intrepidly blew them up. His daring act destroyed scores of the mutineers, and alas! he sacrificed his own life in his determination to do his duty and not let these stores fall into the hands of the enemy.”

Each day the news from India was more and more ghastly; fearful hearts grew more fearful still as they read the harrowing details. About the middle of July it was known that the outbreak in India was fearfully serious, had already attained considerable magnitude, and was spreading like a prairie fire over the country; twenty-six native regiments were in open revolt, as many more were known to be disaffected. In some districts Government had succeeded in disarming the native troops. In other places calling on the men to lay down their arms had been the signal for revolt, for the bloodshed that ensued, as the infuriated Sepoys

turned on their officers, shot them as they stood—then like wild beasts rushed into the cantonments, slaughtered and destroyed all that came in their way, or bore the hated name of European.

Barrackpore, Lucknow, Meerut, Delhi, Agra, all were in wild disorder. In each of these stations there had been rapine and cruel murder. The first blood to the savage natures of the mutineers had been like entering the young hounds, making them more keen for the sport. The more blood that they spilt the more furious and insatiable they grew. Each day incited them to further atrocities. In Meerut and Delhi the outrages had been fearful, the carnage terrible, and deeds of cruelty committed that decent tongues refused to tell; the rebel Sepoys were like ravening beasts, who, with savage instincts inflamed and vile appetites roused, prowled about seeking fresh victims on whom to reek their vengeance and satisfy their vile lusts. Calcutta itself was trembling, and all the Anglo-Indians were crying aloud for help.

England nobly responded to the call; she sent speedy help, gallant soldiers, noble blood,

and astute intellects to their assistance. At twelve hours' notice the brave Sir Colin Campbell started to fulfil his duty as Commander-in-Chief, the reinforcements under orders for China were ordered to proceed direct to Calcutta; soon England would master and chastise these ungrateful, unruly, disobedient children, who had turned to rend the parents who had hitherto fostered, fed, taught and cared for them.

The pulses at home beat high with angry rage and impotent disgust, as fragments such as these were read in the daily records :

“ Women and children have fallen helpless victims to unheard of cruelties at Ourat, Delhi, Kissar, Bareilly, &c.” “ At Shansi the women and children sought refuge in the fort, were hunted out at the point of the bayonet and sacrificed by these demons of hell.” .

Wild moans, and angry cries resounded all over the land. What was the cause of this terrible outburst? Who was to blame? What had turned our Indian lambs into hungry wolves?

Incompetency, incompetency, woeful mal-administration somewhere, was shouted on all sides. Our statesmen were old women. Our officers effeminate dandies. Alas, for the days of Clive, Lawrence and the old heroes who had made the Sepoy army. Oh! for a Wellington who was soldier and statesman in one, a somebody to lead and direct our paralysed Cabinet and subdue and govern our disorganised Indian army.

It was said on the one side that the Indian officers provoked the hatred of their men by contemptuously talking of them as Sepahees or "black fellows." On another, that boys went out to be officers, who spent their time learning to make curry, drink champagne, and shirk the sun. "What can a lad of fifteen know about soldiers or soldiering, who does not actually know what the dispart of a gun is?" asked one. "True, boys have courage—courage is a good thing, but it is not everything in a soldier. Position, discipline, a hundred other things may make up for a lack of dash; but nothing can take the place of zeal—the want of *it* is a floorer!" cried another; while a fifth party insinuated we

owed the Indian disaffection to an over religious zeal on the part of our officers, who had forced Christianity down the throats of the Sepoys as a necessary part of their military duty.

Then came the outcry about the greased cartridges. "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" These, and a hundred other reasons as likely, and as unlikely, were stated to be the origin of the mutiny; everybody had their own theory and wildly defended it; but all were agreed and unanimous in condemning the hideous deeds that day after day were perpetrated by the savage insurgents; and all England clamoured for revenge—she would not be content without teeth for a tooth, eyes for an eye, and hecatombs of black bodies piled up, as a sacrificial offering to appease the manes of her dead heroes—her slaughtered matrons—and her tortured maidens.

The voice of the public cried aloud for justice, swift, sudden and terrible to be inflicted on the hell hounds, the revengeful Asiatics, whose injured pride had set loose and hurled this avalanche of destruction, over-

whelming men, women and children alike in the wild rush of their mad passions.

Had the mutineers confined their fury to the dastard deed of murdering their own officers, cruel and vile as that would have been, some large-hearted philanthropists no doubt would have found excuses to palliate the evil deed, and claim mercy for the miscreants whose misdeeds placed them beyond the pale of civilised beings. But shooting down their officers was amongst the least of their sins; the heart of the nation boiled with indignation, as such items of intelligence as the following oozed out and gave a faint idea of the oceans of innocent blood that the savages had shed, and a peep at the sufferings our poor countrymen and countrywomen had endured at their hands—

“At Allahabad, three generations—grandfather, father, mother, and children have been all burned together. Another family had been cut to pieces inch by inch, noses, ears, fingers and toes hacked off, and then they had been torn limb from limb. At Bareilly the feet of women and little children

in their boots were found strewed about the road. Six little children had their throats cut with broken glass to prolong their suffering. Women were violated, tortured, then hewed to pieces and the palpitating fragments strewn before the horrified eyes of their mothers, sisters, and friends ! ”

One's blood ran cold with horror and disgust as they read, and they shuddered when they remembered that the horrible details over which they grieved, were but a very small portion of the awful truth.

Then again the heart of the nation tingled with proud admiration and satisfaction as they read of doughty deeds. Read how the gallant Guide Corps from Peshawar—those Afghan Herculean athletes—made forced marches to the relief of their white brothers. These gallant Guides were indeed “brothers in arms,” and almost invincible, officered as they were by some of the best of the wild high couraged blood of old England. They fought faithfully, side by side with the English troops, and liberally shed their blood, as, cheered on by their officers, they rushed



to the rescue. Some of these officers were mere boys—noble, gallant lads who, many of them, laid down their lives early; dying heroes, and leaving names that will long be remembered by their grateful country and worshipped by their men.

The autumn of '57 was an awful time of anxiety to all Great Britain. To none, more so, than the young wife at Rendels-holme, who counted the hours till her husband would reach India, and be in the midst of the horrors that she read of.

“Cawnpore, 17th July, Havelock wrote: ‘By the blessing of God I captured this place yesterday. Nana Sahib had massacred all the prisoners. The women and children barbarously murdered.’”

Later on came the heartrending particulars, the horrors indicated by the ghastly well, that had received the mangled remains of the wretched sufferers.

At last, in October, there was a hurried line from Calcutta. Captain Deyereux wrote to say he had arrived safe.

"Troops all in high spirits. Mad to be at the black devils. They were ordered to proceed to Delhi; the country was in a fearful state of anarchy. Their actual route uncertain; letters, of course, likely to be delayed or lost, so you must not be uneasy at not hearing regularly. Keep your heart up, my own darling, and remember, letter or no letter, the memory of you is always in my heart, the recollection of your love the greatest comfort that I have; and next to that is the blessing of knowing you are safe in dear England, away from these hell hounds, who ruthlessly dishonour and destroy helpless women and children. Den. is with the Commander-in-Chief. I have seen him, and I am glad that we will be in the same brigade. And, darling, he is right; war like this makes us think, remember there is a God, and that we have need of Him. God bless and keep you, darling, and bring me safe back to see your sweet face and kiss your sweet lips once again."

Mrs. Devereux shed many tears over her precious letter; and poured her full heart

out in prayer for the preservation of her dear one, to whom her heart clung in his absence even more closely than in his presence.

Baby was a great source of comfort ; he was a fine, intelligent child, and his beautiful dark eyes for ever followed the mother, who never tired of hanging over his little cot, or holding him in her loving arms. His grand-mamma had grown very white, and her face was very careworn, her spirit much broken, and she sought comfort from, more than she gave it to, her young companion.

By the same mail that brought Captain Devereux's letter announcing his arrival at Calcutta, came the official news of the fall of Delhi. Woeful was the loss of life, but complete the success ; 600 gallant soldiers and 40 officers were sacrificed. The king fled, but was captured by Captain Hodson ere he had reached a secure lair. The garrison at Lucknow still gallantly defended themselves. Havelock had fought nine pitched battles, and with indomitable perseverance still manœuvred his handful of troops, and expected shortly to effect their relief. By the 25th September this gallant soldier, in con-

junction with the no less gallant Outram, succeeded in relieving the hard-pressed garrison. The garrison, who in their determination and pluck defied their assailants, and in spite of pressing hunger, misery, sickness and despair, fought with desperation. They had shells, but no mortars. They lifted the shells, fired the fuses, and with their bare hands hurled them at their advancing foes. They would not give in. No, never, as long as they had helpless women depending on their exertions to protect them from the relentless murderers. These heroes were at their last ebb of expiring effort, when the wild cry of Jessie Burns gave fresh courage to their fainting hearts, fresh vigour to their failing arms.

“Courage!” she cried. “Hark to the slogan, to the Macgregor, the grandest of them a’. Here is help at last. Dinna ye hear! dinna ye hear!”

## CHAPTER XVII.

### DEATH AND VICTORY.

A THRILL of proud satisfaction stirred the hearts of those at home as they read of these deeds of daring; as they knew how their soldiers were doing doughty deeds in the face of terrible sufferings and fearful odds. Every mother, wife, and sister felt proud of the noble soldiers. Eyes glistened and hearts beat wildly as the news of heroic deeds spread over the land.

Aye! we were proud of the heroes who bore the brunt of the battle unflinchingly—proud of the noble band of martyrs who stood, a small minority, like a wall of iron against the swarming hordes of savages.

We were proud—proud of the heroism, while we wept the marrow of our bones out in tears of bitter sorrow as we mourned for our sacrificial piles of dead.

When the news came that poor Miss W—'s body had been found and identified in the

“place of skulls” (Cawnpore), that the beautiful hair had been cut from her head and distributed to the soldiers as a precious relic, for every hair of which (and they counted them one by one) they swore with passionate feeling to take the life of a mutineer, the women at home blessed and loved them for their stern vow to avenge the innocent blood, and prayed to God to defend and prosper their arms.

The weary weeks of that terrible winter dragged their slow length out, and the dark short days sent little comfort to the sad hearts that waited, wept and prayed at Rendelsholme; where anxiety weighed heavy on the loving wife, and, if possible, heavier on the proud, stern mother.

Christmas was cheered by a letter dated

“CAWNPORE, Nov. 4TH.

“Arrived here yesterday. We had hard fighting on our way, but thank God I am unhurt—safe so far. So is Den. He is A.D.C. to the Commander-in-Chief, and I am attached to the same brigade, which is pleasant. One’s blood boils when they hear, see and know the cruel outrages

those in authority saw and appreciated his many gallant deeds. I feel with and for you, my dear aunt; and Marie! God help her, poor child, and give her strength to bear this terrible blow. My heart aches when I think of her grief; I am overpowered with sorrow when I remember what an affliction his death will be to her. He has left a will, and made me guardian of the boy. I hope God will spare me to do my duty to the child, and enable me in some measure to replace to him the one who has gone. God comfort and keep you all, and believe me in much trouble,

“Your affectionate nephew,

“RENDELSHOLME.

“Lucknow, 21st March, 1858.”

Fortunately Mrs. Devereux was alone when she read this letter. Her face grew ashen grey, and she bowed her grey head as the wave of bitter anguish swept over her, burying in one fell swoop, in her loved son's far distant bloody grave, her overgrown, worthless pride and ambition, that had hitherto been as the backbone and marrow of her haughty, self-reliant character. Was it for

this she had schemed ? Was it for this she had stooped to mean deceit, to have her son cut off in his early prime ?

Great sobs rose in her throat and almost choked her ; but no blessed tear came as she struggled with her convulsive emotion. Then a great fear fell upon her.

Lord Rendelsholme was left guardian ; had he been told the truth about the child ? Was her reign at Rendelsholme ended ? Would she have to lick the dust of humility at his feet ? Forbid it heaven !

And how was she to know—how could she ascertain if the disgraceful secret had been confided to him ?

She stilled her quivering nerves, and took up the fatal letter ; read it again, pondered every word. The new fear gnawing at her entrails, with its sharp fangs rending and tearing her pride, deadened the great pain of her big grief, and enabled her to bring every power of her brain to sift and weigh every written word in the ominous epistle.

But the dumb paper told no tales, and the written words gave her no enlightenment on what she craved to know. With a low moan



of pain, she threw it down, wringing her hands helplessly as she sobbed with heart-wrung agony, "My son! my son! oh, my dear, dear son."

Then she remembered the widow, the poor child to whom it was her duty to break these terrible tidings.

As she bethought herself of all it meant to the wife, the clinging, tender Marie, she took the fatal letter again in her hand, and, with a grey, scared face, went to seek her son's widow.

It is beyond the power of pen and ink to depict truthfully, so we will draw a veil over the scathing anguish of poor Marie's crushed heart. We will leave her sorrow unrecorded by words of ours, leave the battle of her trouble untold to human ears, as it was unseen by human eyes.

For long months, the gaunt, dim-eyed, white-haired mother and the child-widow kept each other silent company, with their mighty sorrow drawing their inner souls together, and the bright child toddling before them to give new interests in life. He was a bright child; like his father, handsome and very engaging.

Notwithstanding this, the grandmother looked stern and shuddered painfully at the playful shrieks of the little child, averting her sad eyes from his growing beauty, while the shadowy, pale, white mother would stretch out her sheltering arms, and, with faint, watery smiles, greet the beautiful darling, as, crowing with delight, he would throw himself on her heavy, sobbing bosom.

We must leave England—leave the unconscious child, the heart-crushed child-widow, and the stern, guilty, broken-hearted mother, and look at the death-bed of the father, husband and son, who lost his life at the siege of Lucknow, and whose dying groans were mingled with the shouts of that blood-bought victory.

Captain Devereux had been brought in wounded desperately, and quite unconscious.

The surgeon had seen at a glance that it was a hopeless case, and, knowing the intimacy and affection between the cousins, had communicated at once with Lord Rendelsholme.

Hurriedly Lord Rendelsholme had obeyed the summons. Thus it came to pass that,

when Captain Devereux regained his consciousness, the first face he recognised was a home one—Den.'s kind brown eyes, with sad, serious concern, looking down on him.

The dying man smiled as he noticed the pained anxiety of the wistful, watching eyes.

"Stoop down," he whispered faintly. "Den., I have fought my last battle—it is all over. I am a gone man. I want to 'fess.'"

"My dear fellow, is there anything in this world I can do for you? Oh, Denzil, I wish it was I. My life could be so much better spared than yours."

"It is best as it is, Den." He broke down a little, and was silent for a few moments. After he went on, "Den., I know it is true *now*, what I once laughed at you for saying; this war has ground *it in*."

"Thank God for that," whispered Lord Rendelsholme.

"So I do," smiled the other; then he broke out hoarsely, "But, oh! it is so hard to die and leave my little Marie all alone to bear her trouble. I loved her so dearly, and yet my love has brought a terrible curse upon

her. Den., you don't know how I have deceived her—wronged her, and wronged you—”

“Me! my dear fellow.” Lord Rendelsholme started, and the red conscious blood dyed his cheek as he hurriedly asseverated, “You never wronged me. She loved you, was indifferent to me. I asked her, and she refused to marry me.”

He spoke quickly, evidently imagining the dying man thought he had come between him and his cousin, and wishing to relieve his mind on that score.

“I thought so,” muttered Captain Devereux, smiling faintly; “but I did not mean *that*. I have written it all out, Den. I feared it might come to this, and I could not take my secret with me. You will take the packet home—comfort and support poor Marie. Mind, I leave you a solemn charge to do what is best *for her*—to cherish and to care for her always. Will you undertake it?”

“Yes.”

“Will you swear it?”

“There is no need to swear. She is as

dear to me as she is to you. I would lay down my life for her."

Captain Devereux looked at his cousin with a steadfast, earnest gaze, as if his wistful, black, dying eyes were gauging the depth and strength of the worth of the other's nature. Then he said—

"Dear honest old Den., you are thoroughly trustworthy. I would to God the child had loved and married you, it would have been better for her."

"Hush! do not say that—I cannot bear it," groaned the other.

"But it is true. Your love would have been a blessing to her; mine brought a curse with it."

"No, no, she loved you. It has been all right," assured Lord Rendelsholme, soothingly.

"All right," repeated the other, sadly. "No, it was all wrong. Listen. If I have strength I will tell you why, do not interrupt or I may not have time to finish." Then in feeble, broken tones he told his story.

"It is three years ago—is it only three years?—three years that have been a whole

life time to me—that with my usual thoughtlessness I was killing time, kicking my heels about Cork idly, when one day I took it into my silly head to go hake fishing. In search of this amusement I went to Kinsale, found the night work exciting, something new; it was a rough life, unlike any of our home sport, for which I liked it all the better. Every spare hour I devoted to haking, and soon had an extensive acquaintance amongst a lot of wild, daring fellows, some of them half savages, unacquainted with the amenities of civilised life, but rare good fellows at sport. They fell in with my wild humour; and one of them, Sullivan, interested me amazingly; with him I chummed, he became a great ally of mine. Night after night I spent with him in his boat, my days knocking about with him on shore. He had a sister—one of the handsomest girls I ever saw, modest and retiring. I could seldom meet her; this I suppose made me the more anxious. The brother and sister lived in a lone cottage, outside the village, and superior to the other poor cabins on that wild sea shore. Winny was a sort of queen amongst them; she was a

proud innocent girl, they looked up to her and she held herself above them all. She was very ignorant, very beautiful, very young, and there was some mystery about her, an engagement, the village said. This influenced my curiosity, I was determined to cultivate her, and I did. You know in the old days I never denied myself anything I had a fancy for ; never counted the cost. I fancied Winny. Winny was proud, her brother was cute. In a mad hour—I—married her."

"What !" exclaimed Lord Rendelsholme, fairly amazed out of his silent sympathy. "Do I understand you right?"

"Don't interrupt, but listen. I am growing weaker every moment and I must tell you. I was mad—drunk—drunk with folly and self-will anyway, when one night a priest came and married me to Winny ; married us privately, for I said it must, for the present, be a secret. I was in one of my reckless moods, thoroughly thoughtless as to the future, with no thought beyond the gratification of the present moment. But a week after, when I got back to my regiment, I felt what an utter idiot I had been." He closed

his eyes and rested for a moment, while the other sat in sad silence beside him. "Then my mother wrote to me about Marie, telling me how lovely and loveable she was, and advising me to marry her. I was afraid to confess I was already married, ashamed of the wife I had saddled myself with. But I was no villain, I had no thought, no idea of casting off the poor girl, I only waited for a convenient opportunity to tell my mother. At last I went to Rendelsholme fully determined to make a clean breast of my folly. When I saw my mother, for the first time in my life I felt afraid to tell the truth, to acknowledge my mad act. She was determined I should marry Marie and secure the estate. God help her ! her blind pertinacity made me afraid to acknowledge that I had a wife. This was the first time I had seen Marie since she was a child—and, in spite of myself, I learned to love her. Poor child, I was a great brute, and did my best to make her hate me. At last, when I could bear it no longer I ran away. I went back to Cork to my regiment, and as in duty bound to my wife. God help me ! I loathed myself when I saw the clog I had bound



round my own neck. I began almost to hate, and I saw twenty faults in poor Winny. Our marriage was still a secret, no one, not even the rude fishermen had a notion of it, and I began planning how I could send her to school to be educated and then bring her home and acknowledge her to my own people. Then came the news of your death, and immediately after my uncle's. I was Lord Rendelsholme. I shuddered when I thought of her ladyship. I went to the funeral; then there was the will. My mother was more pressing than ever that I should marry the heiress! and every hour I looked at her, Marie grew deeper into my heart. While business detained me at Rendelsholme, my wife had a baby! it died, and I thanked God that it did. For a long time Winny was very ill, I did my best to her, though I believe in my secret heart I was a murderer, for I hoped she would die. I prayed to be delivered from the clog." Lord Rendelsholme started. "Don't look at me like that, there is no need, she did *not* die, and I tell you I did my duty by her. She lived, she grew strong and well. At this time *you* were come home—at

Rendelsholme. A mad jealousy came over me, *you* would love and marry Marie. A great craving came over me to look on her sweet face once more. I went to Rendelsholme and guessed you loved the child. I knew you were worthy, I hoped you would marry her; I felt a doomed wretch and suffered the pangs of the damned. I did indeed, yet I waited on, hoping and fearing every day to hear my death knell. But what am I saying, what could *she* be to *me then*? Then came the ill-fated day when my mother told me you and Marie were out in the hay field. That you were going to marry the child—putting my own ideas into words. Then my mother upbraided me for letting you come inside me, between me and the heiress! I could bear no more. I could not wait to hear you had won the prize. I dashed out of the house like a lunatic. I reasoned with myself on my madness. I forced myself to swear I would leave Rendelsholme for ever. With which resolve in my miserable heart I came suddenly on a wounded dove, resting at the foot of a beech tree. So help me heaven! I did not mean to say a word; I meant to pass

on, but in my anguish her name did escape me. The child heard. Then I knew she loved me. Reason left me—and I clutched her to my heart; for the moment my wife had quite faded out of my mind.”

All this had been told with pauses and sad gasps. Now thoroughly exhausted; Captain Devereux relapsed into unconsciousness; for two hours his horrified cousin sat by him, hoping for a few more explanatory words, and fearing for the end.

At last the great black eyes, pitiful in their pain and weakness, opened wearily, and asking for a stimulant, he went on with his gruesome tale.

“I think I was mad in those days. I was mad when I married my wife, and I married her in a false name. The Sullivans only knew me as Denzil Tredgar. It had been a silly freak to call myself so at first; then cursed pride made me stick to it, they knew little about me, had no idea of my true position. The devil tempted me to ignore my irregular marriage, contracted in a false name. I had no connected plan, no definite thought in my head, only the one mad desire in my

heart to have my little Marie all for my own. Then the horror of what my deceit would entail, the consequences of my mad folly to Marie flashed upon me. My brain was on fire. I grew mad with anguish, and pity for Marie—over-mastered, I implored her to give me up, but the sweet child loved me, and she would not. Then—her love was so sweet—I could not tell—I thought when I went away I would write and tell her the truth—I could not do it face to face. I returned to Cork, and determined to act honestly, I went straight to my wife—she was gone!”

“Where? What!” incredulously escaped from his lordship.

“I told you there had been a rumour of her being engaged when I first knew her. One of the wild Cornish fishermen, who each season cross over and fish the Irish waters had admired and wooed her. She did not care for him, but he was wealthy for their station in life, and her brother Patsey had favoured the match. Black Derrick was a fierce, violent tempered, lawless man, and he would have her, he said. That was two years ago—a year before I married her.

Now a Derrick had come and carried her off! The whole village was in an uproar at the audacious abduction of the girl. Her brother had gone off in pursuit. Then gossip whispered how she was Black Derrick's wife! Two years ago she had been frightened into marrying him; he had gone to sea suddenly, and never returned to claim his unwilling bride. It was not he who had carried her off, but a cousin of his who had stolen the girl to carry her to her husband. I waited—watched—questioned, and was beside myself with anxiety. Then a paragraph in the newspaper stated how the Cornish boat was wrecked at the Land's End, and all on board had perished. I could get no further tidings of Winny. The popular voice said she was Black Derrick's wife, and the public papers that she was drowned. I was a free man! But I hardly felt worthy to marry my little cousin. I returned to her, I implored her to give me up. She would not, and I blessed her for her sweet love, her trust, and her constancy. Next day we were married. I, who had been a Parian, was clothed in my right mind, with such a wife! We had three

months of peace and exquisite happiness. Then—my sin found me out. One night a man rushed past me; he stopped short, and whispered, "Where is Winny?" It was Pat Sullivan! he was gone before I could speak—gone like an arrow from a bow. I raced after him, but lost him in the dark. Day after day I hunted for him, but never met him again—never saw him—till I saw him drowned before my eyes. He took whatever secret he had with him to the bottom of the sea. My life was a hell to me at this time. I feared I knew not what—I believed Winny was alive, and I did not know she was Derrick's wife. Every loving caress of my Marie's was a stab to my heart. I loved her better than myself, and my love had brought this fearful possibility to her. If Winny was alive?—if Winny was not Derrick's wife?—what was my Marie? I almost went out of my mind, for I could find no clue to the truth—I tried everywhere. Then Winny found me!"

: "Poor Denzil! poor fellow! She is Derrick's wife?"

"She is dead. She was married to Der-

rick, and thought he was dead when she married me. He had left her the week of their marriage and never come back; she expected him always—feared his coming—but he never came. She had hated him—was glad to be rid of him, and easily persuaded herself to believe he was dead. She had no proof but his mysterious absence. She loved and she married me. Suddenly one night Derrick's cousin, a discarded suitor, who was more detestable in her eyes even than her husband, burst in on her, and despite her struggles seized and carried her off in the dead of night—he said, to her husband. Once on board his boat this miscreant tauntingly told her her husband slept three fathoms deep, and that he meant to have her for himself. This ill-fated boat was wrecked on the coast of Cornwall, all lives lost but Winny's. Alone, a pauper, in a strange land, she longed, yet feared, and did not know where to seek me. She did not know if she was my wife, or had done me the greatest wrong she could. She was afraid of meeting Black Derrick—anxious to ascertain the fact and date of his death.

Poor soul! she had a hard time of it—suffered terribly ere she found a kindly welcome with her sister, who curiously enough lived in Warwick and knew nothing of her story. There Winny recognised me. There a baby was born, and she died. I saw her die; I have been an altered man since. Poor Winny's death eased me, took a load off my heart, yet left a horrible dread in my mind—for there was the baby, my son! I took it home—took it from its dead mother's arms, and meant to tell my whole story to Marie. When I reached home I found her dangerously ill—a son was born to her that night—it was premature—and—the baby died. I buried the dead child with the dead woman—Marie has Winny's child and thinks it is her own. I never told her the truth.”

Thoroughly exhausted he ceased to speak, and lay back with closed eyes, whose black lashes were damp with uncontrollable emotion. There was a dead silence while Lord Rendelsholme's clear mind dwelt on the story and saw at a glance the many complications and troubles. At length he stooped down and whispered—



"Denzil, do you hear—can you understand me?"

The exhausted man looked up at him with painful consciousness in his dim eyes.

"Yes, what is it?"

"We must never tell Marie now—it would kill her."

A faint smile swept over the dying man's face as he murmured—

"My own coward thought always. The child is brave; she must be told, told the truth, even though it makes her hate me. Don't you know the wording of that cursed will? If Marie has no child she is penniless—she has no claim to Rendelsholme but through her boy, and he is not her son. And, poor love, she may be no wife! God help her—it is best she should know the truth—forget me. And—"

"Hush! She is standing in her rightful place—mistress of Rendelsholme. Let us leave it so."

"No, it is defrauding you and your heirs; if Marie has no son, Rendelsholme is yours; if she marries and has a son, should go to him—this present boy has no claim as my

son, even if legally my own, and of that there is no proof. I have thought the whole matter over till my brain has reeled ; I have wanted to do justice to all, and have made my will, leaving all my property to Marie unconditionally."

"And the boy?" enquired Lord Rendels-holme.

"I have left his future to her love and your mercy. I could not take a fraction to provide for him from the portion of the woman I have so desperately wronged. She may wish to go away and hide her wounded heart—perhaps she may seek comfort in her convent. She has no claim to any money except what I leave her, unless she marries again. God help the poor innocent child—I wish I could drain all the bitterness of the cup myself, but it cannot be."

"It must be. Listen. There is no one who knows or can dispute her being your lawful wife, or cast a doubt upon the boy's being her own but myself. I am the only interested party, and I gladly forego my rights to save her. Let it be so."

"Dear self-sacrificing Den.—but you will

marry—and your son. No, no, the truth is best; it might only make further sin and worse trouble.”

He was very exhausted, and the sunk eyes could hardly keep their heavy lids up, or the white lips form the necessary words.

“But my dear, dear fellow! I’ll never marry, unless—”

“Perhaps—you’ll—marry her,” came very low and trembling from the camp bed, where the repentant man’s life was fast fleeing away.

A very sweet, sad smile answered this suggestion.

“God bless her. I fear she never will marry—there is no such happiness in store for me. Denzil, Denzil, for God’s sake don’t oblige me to break the heart of the only woman I love with this sad, useless tale. Let me bury it with you, and let the innocent Marie bear the lesser sorrow of being your lonely, loving widow.”

“If you tell her she’ll hate me, and then she may turn for comfort to you,” sighed Captain Devereux.

“Never! she is too true of heart for that.

She loves you—she will love you to the end despite sorrow and mistakes. She will hate me if I am even the unwilling bearer of the news that tries to blacken the memory of the man she loves, and tear away her comfort—the child of the man she loves.”

“But she may marry elsewhere—what then? Fifty complications may arise. I must save her from suffering if I can—the truth is the best,” insisted Captain Devereux.

“I do not think she will ever marry again,” said Lord Rendelsholme, slowly. “Leave it to my discretion; if it is needful, I will tell her; if not, may I be silent?”

Captain Devereux was now fairly exhausted, but he roused himself once more, and whispered, faintly—

“The proofs—the story—the will—are in my desk; I leave them to you. I trust them to your honour. Do as you think best. Spare my darling what suffering you can, and befriend the poor little child. God bless you, Den.; you are a good man, and I owe you a big debt of gratitude. Confessor dear, you have eased my mind—and—and—you

have taught me—there is atonement—a refuge—” He lay back white and still, and through the stiffening lips issued a faint breath, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” With these words went his life.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### NEMESIS.

Two years had elapsed, since the close of our last chapter, ere Lord Rendelsholme met his cousin.

First, the exigencies of the Indian Mutiny necessitated his absence ; secondly, a certain consciousness and unsettled state of mind had prolonged the interval somewhat beyond the time that his military duties had actually claimed his attention. He could not make up his mind how to meet her, or what it was his duty to tell her.

Under any circumstances, the meeting would be a trial ; under present circumstances, exquisitely painful to him and, no doubt, most trying to her.

The cousins had never met since that summer afternoon, four years ago, when he limped away a rejected suitor, leaving her a frightened child, resting under the shade of the beeches.

And Lord Rendelsholme was blessed with

the Devereux characteristic—steadfastness ; he had loved his cousin ; his love had not lessened with absence, but rather increased with time ; he loved her, if possible *now*, better than he had done then. Therefore, to his sensitive heart, with the secret he carried in his breast of her past, it must be a painful meeting ; but, painful or not, it was a duty, a necessary duty ; therefore the sooner the first meeting was got over the better—so—

At last, with an anxious mind and fearful heart, he turned his steps to Rendelsholme.

Young Mrs. Devereux met her cousin with a calm, simple, childlike manner ; with a gentle, sad dignity she greeted him, and even mustered a feeble smile as she welcomed him “ home.”

The tears trembled in the lovely true eyes as the young widow murmured she was thankful the war had spared her one friend from whom to seek counsel in her loneliness. Then, overcome with the overwhelming remembrance of “ the one taken,” she relapsed into a silence, eloquent with untold emotion.

Lord Rendelsholme was no less affected ;

completely overpowered with conflicting feelings, he could find no words, so looked at her with tender, respectful sympathy. His silence suited her need; consequently, without any out-spoken word, she fully understood and appreciated his thought for her.

Lord Rendelsholme was surprised at the great change he saw in his cousin.

He had left her a child; a being bathed in bright, unconscious freshness, with a velvet bloom of innocence, a lovely, promising bud of beauty. Every trace of her girlhood was gone, totally obliterated.

In its place there had come a something far more beautiful, more ravishingly lovely, more absolutely enthralling.

This small, delicate, black-draped figure, this fragile, white-faced child-widow, this spiritual, fair, pale saint, with the lovely eyes full of the indescribable dignity of her great sorrow, underladen with the strength of a mighty endurance born of her acquaintance with grief, was a new revelation, a new being!

This widowed Marie was a new person. Lord Rendelsholme was grieved to the heart



when he recognised the transformation ; for, then he knew the child must have trod bare-foot over the red-hot ploughshares of affliction, must have suffered untold agony ere she reached such calm, saintly sorrow as this. She was, indeed, one who had been "purged with fire," and now stood purified, refined like tried steel.

She was no longer the child he had longed to clasp to his bosom, to love, shelter, and cherish, to guard from all earthly trouble, to keep free from sorrow, uncontaminated from all evil, fresh, sweet, and charming in the safe haven of his home. No ; she was no longer *this*. But she was something far more exquisite still, more precious, more lovely in his eyes. She was a woman ; a woman who had supped of sorrow, learned of grief, who through the travail of bitter affliction, had been mightily sustained and supported, borne out of herself and carried upward, till, with noble endurance, she stood alone, with patience possessing her soul ; no longer a child, to be petted and shielded, but a woman to be looked up to, respected, revered, and venerated.

To him she was more lovely, more loveable than ever, and, in her new character, drew out from the innermost recesses of his heart all the adoration there was in him. Truly, "with his body" he did "worship her," as, in her quiet, saintly grief, she seemed further removed from the reach of his love than ever.

Their intercourse was very unaffected, as, with womanly submission, Mrs. Devereux sought and took counsel from her cousin's wisdom. He was the guardian of her boy—her treasure—the one pledge of her dead husband's affection; and this dear treasure was now the cause of much thought and anxiety to her.

With eyes that showed a recent acquaintance with tears, Mrs. Devereux one day sought Lord Rendelsholme in the library.

"Den.," said she, smiling through her tears, "I want your advice and help."

"Something about the boy?" asked he, cheerily, most of her confidences being on that head.

"Yes, and other things. I am puzzled, troubled, because I am doubtful what is

right. My confessor has been urging—nay, ordering is the fitter word—me to teach my boy the alphabet of religion.”

“ Well, very good advice, is it not ? How old is Denzy, by the way ? ”

“ Three. But you do not seem quite to understand. Father Newell says I *must* teach Denzy *my* religion.”

“ Oh ! that is another thing. And you—?”

“ Am doubtful. I am not sure it would be right. I know his father would not like it ; besides, I have a doubt—it is a very serious thought—perhaps my religion is not the right one.” The sapphire eyes were ablaze with anguish, washed in tears, as she went on with suppressed excitement—“ Sorrow is a hard taskmaster ; it makes one learn. Lately I have found very little comfort, and less hope, in my religious duties. I do not like Father Newell ; he is not kind, as dear old Father Sinclair was. No, he is cruel—cruel, hard, and harsh. He has no pity ; he has spoken ill of the dead. He has told me my love for my husband was a weakness, my marriage a sin. Oh ! he makes me shudder. I fear him ;

and he wants my boy. Why, why does he torment me? This cannot be religion. He must be a bad, bad man. Oh! if Father Sinclair was alive he would never frighten me like this. Den., what *am* I to do, for he torments me—and—he wants Denzy?"

She was painfully roused.

"My dear, my dear, calm yourself, do not be alarmed about the child; that is my business to see after. Father Newell shall not interfere with the child. But you, how can I shield you? He may subject you to much trial and importunity which I am powerless to avert. How can I help you?"

"I—I—found some comfort in the Bible. I told Father Newell so, and asked him to explain to me why the Bible and our Church differed. He was angry, and said I could not understand. Again I asked the same question; then he told me I was imbibing heretical notions, ordered me to put away my Bible and listen to the Church; she would teach me all that was needful for my peace, comfort, and salvation. I did his bidding, and I have not found comfort, far from it; my mind is more distracted than

ever. Oh ! Den., it is a terrible thing to be a poor weak woman, all alone, groping for light and finding none. I am uncertain what is right, and I do *so* want to read the Bible; it was quite a friend to me in my trouble."

"Then read it. God's Word can do no harm. On the contrary it will strengthen and be blessed to you, no doubt. And, my dear Marie, do not allow this new priest to ride rough shod over you; do not be bullied by Father Newell. You want light—seek it, God will comfort you my dear. I do not exactly see how I can help you, but the boy, of course, I can interfere about, and will. I am his guardian. Newell shall be made to understand that I will not permit him to meddle with the boy—trust me to settle that."

She did trust him. And, he was as good as his word. This was Mrs. Devereux's first confidence of a spiritual nature, but it was followed by others of the same touching innocent doubt and bewilderment.

For she was fairly bewildered, as, Father Newell on the one side rattled the Church's formularies in her ears—ordered penances

for her comfort and consolation—frightened her with his vehemence, anathematised her for her silly idle fears and cowardly hesitation, called her loving faith and trust to the dead heretic damnable—her treachery about her son a deadly sin. Poor, tortured heart. On the other side she found full kindly sympathy, as Lord Rendelsholme listened attentively to all her doubts and troubles, combating the former, and soothing the latter, gently directing her enquiring mind to the Fountain of all Truth.

It was a sharp tussle. But the ban of her Church on her dead husband, the threats to her living child, sharpened her perceptions. God, dealing with her through her maternal instincts opened her eyes; and at last, hand in hand with the little boy, clad in her sable weeds, she one Sunday appeared in the little parish church. Ever after she worshipped there meekly and humbly, and found comfort and peace in so doing.

Little Denzy grew very fond of Lord Rendelsholme, who took great notice of the child, told him many stories, was kind, gentle, but strict with him; very different from the boy's

grim grandmother, a stern silent woman who seldom addressed the child except with an irritable interference, querrulous complaint or severe command.

Old Mrs. Devereux seemed consumed with a silent despair ; she made no outward moan but daily grew more feeble and weak, as she watched with an ill-concealed jealousy the growing devotion of her grandson to her nephew, to both of whom she seemed to have an unaccountable distaste and aversion ; of the latter a nervous fear, which he did his best, by courteous attention, to mollify and overcome.

Poor heart-broken mother ! Her son's will puzzled and frightened her. Why had he left all he possessed to Marie ? Why had he not named his child ? Why ? Why ? Did Lord Rendelsholme know the story ? If he did ?

She tortured herself with doubts, that silent stern woman, and her guilty conscience gave her no peace. She was afraid.

The son she had sinned for was dead—and this child—she hated him, unconscious infant that she herself had pawned upon them to steal Rendelsholme from the rightful Deve-

reuxs ; he was her scourge. She felt there was nothing left for her to do but to die. Disappointed ambition, strangled rectitude, combined with the love mouldering in her dead son's grave were sapping her life away. With stubborn will she hugged her secret ; perhaps also some tender pity for the poor white-faced widow who would suffer so terribly if she spoke, guided her. Be that as it may she kept her secret, and chafed inwardly as she saw the love grow between the nephew she was so jealous of, and, who was a true Devereux, and the little innocent grandchild, who was a nameless being. How she repented. How she hated the child whose new born existence had been the ready instrument at her hand in the hour of her temptation, and who now formed the unconscious tool with which remorse probed her heart, cut her to the quick, hurrying her to the grave, where soon her torn, bleeding, lacerated heart would be freed from her wearied flesh.

At last the old lady, prematurely old, for she was only a little past sixty years of age, was confined to her bed, utterly worn out. It was pretty to see the fair slight girlish



figure, weighted and encumbered with the widow's weeds, hanging over the sick bed, floating noiselessly about, gently ministering to every want of the impatient, irritable, and often unreasonable invalid. With tender love and sweet patience Marie attended on her aunt. Suddenly, one day, in a gentler voice than usual the sick lady enquired—

“Where is Den.? Has he been here lately?”

“Not very lately, grandmamma.” Since the boy had learned to speak, young Mrs. Devereux had always thus addressed her mother-in-law, it was a new and loving tie between them she thought.

“Is he coming soon?” questioned the elder.

“Not that I know of;” the fair pale face flushed slightly. “Denzy says he wants him, but I tell him he cannot come. Den. has other things to do than talking to old women like me, and playing with little boys like him. Do you know, granny, they have made him a General, the youngest in the service, he is a great hero, too big a man to be buried at Rendelsholme with stupid moles like us,”

ended she with an attempt at playfulness which met with no response from the invalid.

Presently Marie was startled by her aunt again reverting to Den., after whom she seldom enquired, and in whose movements she generally took no interest whatsoever.

"If Den. is not coming, send for him, my dear. I want him," she blurted out.

"Oh! he is sure to be here by Christmas—won't that do, there is no good in bothering him to come before," answered Marie.

"Christmas is a month off—my business cannot wait—send for him I tell you—send for him. Bother or no bother he must come," insisted her aunt.

The sick woman was irritably imperative, therefore in obedience to her wishes, Marie wrote, and wrote somewhat unwillingly to summon Lord Rendelsholme. A something in her cousin's manner on his last visit had jarred on a bruised sore in her heart; therefore she did not want to have him too much at Rendelsholme.

The second night after the letter was sent, but before his lordship had time to appear, the invalid had a sudden change for the worse.

Nurse Fraser, who, much against the invalid's wishes, young Mrs. Devereux insisted on having sleep in her aunt's room, was alarmed at the invalid's restless sleep and ceaseless mutterings, which, towards morning, assumed the frightful character of violent delirium.

So distressing were Mrs. Devereux's hallucinations that, when the morning brought young Mrs. Devereux to her aunt's door, Nurse Fraser, with streaming eyes, tried to dissuade her from entering the sick room.

"Please do not go in, ma'am. Indeed, my dear, it is no use. She will not know you, and it is very painful to hear her raving. She is quite unconscious what she is saying, and it is not fit for you to hear; be ruled by me, my dear," cried the faithful servant, imploringly. "I entreat you to go away. Leave Mrs. Devereux to me; I will do all she wants, and if she regains consciousness I will call you."

"But let me just go in and see her," urged the widow. "I need not stay."

"There is no good your seeing her. It will only distress you for nothing. Go away,

my dear," urged Nurse Fraser, with anxious face.

"My good Fraser, you are quite overcome. Is my aunt so very much worse?"

"Very much worse, ma'am—dying. She is raving frightfully. She is quite out of her mind; will not recognise you, so there is no need you should distress yourself by going in. Please, please be guided by your old nurse, my dear. She knows what is best for you. Go away, my dear; there is no good harrowing your poor heart for nothing. You have had trouble enough of your own in your young life without this awful worry to fret you. Go away, my dear, go away. Go to the nursery to your boy and comfort yourself," entreated Nurse Fraser, while she anxiously almost pushed her mistress away from the sick woman's door, which she kept closely shut. "You did all you could for the poor lady. You can do no more now. For God's sake do as I ask; go away and leave her to me."

Here a wild cry came through the closed door—

"Marie! Marie! Where is she—Marie!

I tell you, Denzil, it will kill her—Marie ! Marie ! ” in heartrending shrieks, was again repeated.

“ There, nurse, you hear. She calls me. I must go ; let me pass.”

Very gently but determinately the mistress overruled her servant, opened the door, went in, closed it, and was alone with the gaunt woman with flaming eyes, who sat up in the bed weeping and wringing her hands, while she moaned and yelled alternately broken mysterious sentences.

“ I am here, granny. What can I do for you ? ” said the kind, gentle voice.

“ Poor little thing ! Poor little Marie ! I tell you, Denzil, she will never know. Bury the dead child—take it away, take it away. I hate to see it, poor little thing ! Bury it with the dead woman. We will have a bonny boy—an heir ! A son for our Marie, an heir for the estate ! Denzil, Denzil, hear me, a boy for Marie ! Marie is your wife. I tell you she is. Oh ! Denzil, my son, my son, no one will ever know. Let me do—let me do it for Marie’s sake. Marie ! Marie ! Do you want to kill her ? It will be murder, I tell

you. Ha ! ha ! murder." The laugh was perfectly awful, and made the frightened, horrified hearer's blood run cold. " Who says she is not your wife ? No one knows but you and I. We will change the child—the living for the dead. There, there ; now, my son, that is right. There is no harm ; no one is wronged. Now Marie has her child, and you are master at Rendelsholme, dear Rendelsholme—dear old place. The rightful master has come home at last. . . . Oh ! oh ! my son, my son—they have killed ; he is laid in a bloody grave. Marie is not his wife ; no, no, and there is no little heir. No, Marie is your wife. It is your wife and child. A dead child ; Marie has no child. Marie's child is dead, dead, dead ; no little heir. What are we to do ? "

Here indistinct mutterings followed, to be again disturbed by wailings about the dead son, the baby, and the wife, pitiable in their incoherent earnestness as they fell on the pained ears of the trembling hearer. Was the sick woman as unconscious of what she said as her ravings would lead one to suppose ? And were they ravings, or some

horrid truth that the hearer did not understand ?

Hour by hour Mrs. Devereux raved, and, despite all entreaty of the good-hearted doctor and Nurse Fraser, her daughter-in-law watched beside her, listened, and began to fear there was more method in her madness than doctor or nurse were disposed to believe.

“Ha! ha! blood, blood; sin is washed out; repented of in blood. Denzil is steeped in blood. Denzil! Denzil! rightful owner of Rendelsholme. What a poor little thing! It is dead. Ugh! let me wrap its little body in the red shawl. There, there, we have got the little heir. What a beauty he is. No one knows. Ha! ha! ha! Den. shall never come inside you, my son—between you and your inheritance.”

So on, hour after hour, the changes were rung on the miserable story.

In the evening Lord Rendelsholme arrived, and was shocked to hear how his aunt was affected. Nurse Fraser was his informant; for young Mrs. Devereux begged of her to go and tell his lordship, as she could not bear to leave her aunt's room.

Shocked as he was to hear of his aunt's illness, it was nothing compared to his horror when Fraser, half choked with her sobs and fears, related the turn Mrs. Devereux's delirium had taken.

"She is rambling about changed children ; the mistress having no son. Being no wife. It is very trying, my lord. I wish you could get the mistress to come down ; for, though we know it is all folly—foolish madness, it is painful to hear her talk and see her glower at that poor young thing ; then yell wildly for her dead son. It would break a heart of stone, that it would, to say nothing of a poor young widow who has had trouble enough of her own to bear in her short life."

"I'll go and see what I can do," said Lord Rendelsholme, gravely.

Very shortly he was standing by the bedside, where, wearily resting in an easy chair, sat the poor young widow, her pallid cheeks seamed with tears, and her wide, open, frightened eyes watching the panting, drivelling figure that lay on the bed, very far spent, far on the way to—where ?

Alas ! poor desolate, misguided mother ;



the fire has faded from her maniac eyes, which are half closed, and her poor white hair is streaming over her pillow, as, with exhausted voice, she keeps on her horrid weird monotone.

Lord Rendelsholme looked at his aunt pityingly for a time. She never noticed him. Then he crossed over and stood by his cousin Marie, whispering an entreaty that she would retire and rest herself, and let him watch by his aunt. She shook her head in the negative; she could not bring herself to go away, and her nerves seemed so overstrained, he ceased to urge her; so quietly took a chair and sat near her.

Both of them remained silent, watching and waiting, every moment expecting the end.

Suddenly a wild yell from the stricken woman on the bed made both jump to their feet—

“Send him away! send him away! He is accusing me! Send him away, I say. Marie, Marie, Marie, save me. I did it for Denzil; save me. My son, Denzil, my son, my handsome son, my pride! Ah! see, he points at me.” The poor woman gibbered and pointed

at Lord Rendelsholme; then crouched away to the far side of the bed. "He knows. I see it in his eye. Marie, you have no son. I did it for Denzil, my son. The poor little dead boy is buried. The dead boy and the dead woman in one grave. Poor little Marie, no wife and no child. It will kill her. There, see, he is looking at me! I tell you he knows. Take me away! take me away! Marie, save me. I did it for Denzil, and you loved him. Marie, where are you?"

"Here, Granny, here; no one shall hurt you. I am here."

"Granny! ha! ha! Granny! *yes*, but you have no child, I tell you, it is dead, dead. Marie, save me, take me away." Here she drew herself up, and threw herself forward on Marie's neck, wailing with feeble tones, "I did it for Denzil—for my handsome son, Denzil, Denzil, that he should have Rendelsholme, dear Rendelsholme—the rightful heir, Denzil Rendelsholme—my Denzil Rendelsholme—Denzil."

Very feeble were the last words, and then the grey head fell forward, forward on the bosom of the trembling woman, whose out-

stretched arms, strong in their affection, supported her sinking form.

There were one or two faint sobs, and then, all unknowingly, Marie held a corpse in her arms. The poor tortured spirit of her mother-in-law had gone to give her account. Marie was surprised when Lord Rendels-holme gently relieved her of her burden, quietly laying the grey head back on the crushed, disordered pillows. She looked in dazed wonder while he smoothed the counterpane, and then, with a sad, grieved face, he turned to her, took her hand, and, with gentle firmness, said—

“Poor soul! it is all over! Come, Marie!”

Sobbing, but unresisting, she let him lead her to her own room door. There he said, very gravely—

“Go in now, my dear, and rest; you need it sadly.”

Still clinging to his hand, she went in, and drew him with her.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### TRUE TILL DEATH.

THE young widow drew her cousin into her room, closed the door ; then, forcing back her tears, she turned to him—

“Den., it was dreadful, poor, poor granny ! *What* did she mean ? She said *you* knew.”

He answered very low, with a pained, sad voice, and eyes fixed on the ground—

“My dear, she was raving ; you must not lay any weight to the wild words of delirium ; these weird, fanciful distortions of dethroned reason are always painful to the hearers. The sooner you forget what she said the better.”

“But I cannot forget. Every word is fixed on my brain. Look at me, Den.” Unwillingly he did so, looked at her with his kind eyes full of pity. “I think, I believe, she meant something that I ought to know. There is a secret which you know, and could tell me if you would. Tell me, Den. !”

Lord Rendelsholme looked silently at his cousin, while she continued entreating him.

"Tell me the truth—what could she mean by saying I had no son? There is Denzy; surely she could not have forgotten him? She spoke of a dead and living child. She said *my* child was dead. I never had a child but Denzy—my own, precious little darling. What did she mean?"

"How can I say—how explain what she meant? Do not ask me, my dear," answered he, in deep distress, "to unravel the threads of a sick woman's distorted brain. Poor soul! it was sad to hear her. She was wrapped up in her son. Every thought merged in Denzil; she was full of her own dead; his name was the last on her lips. She was dreaming of him," he urged, prevaricatingly.

"Yes, Denzil," assented the widow, "my husband—but why did she say I was no wife. God help me! *that* is too true, I am no wife now, only a lonely, desolate widow." It was heartrending to him to listen, as she went on vehemently, "If my husband was alive—if my darling were here, he would tell

me the truth, he would not let me be deceived—and, something I know is kept from me—I see it in your face. It is cruel, cruel, cruel; any certainty would be better than this fearful doubt. Den., you profess to be my friend. I feel there is some secret—one connected with my boy—you know it. If you are the friend you profess to be, tell me the truth!” entreated she, looking up, with wide-open, earnest eyes into his anxious face.

“ Marie, I am your friend, and I tell you it is best that you forget all my poor aunt said.”

There was pained, hurt disappointment in the poor white face, as she spoke to him again.

“ My husband trusted you ; with his dying breath he left me to your care. At least so you told me, and I believed you. Now you are untrue to his confidence and my trust—you are deceiving me. Den., I did not believe you could be so untrue, or so cruel to a poor, helpless woman, who has no friend left to turn to in this weary world but yourself. If you will not tell me the truth, I must bear as best I can the horrible doubt that my aunt’s words have planted in my heart. I can never forget them, for they are rooted, and their

poison will embitter what little comfort God has spared me in my wicked life. I shall never have a moment's peace until I know the truth about my boy ; the fear that some day something may arise to injure him will be ever tormenting me." Then, with helpless sadness, she pointed to the door. " Go, there is no use in your standing there, looking at me ! " He still stood looking at her ; then, with a scathing severity, very unlike her usual gentle dignity, or calm, subdued manner, she reiterated her words. As she did so, she looked like a roused tigress defending her young. Her angry eyes blazed, she pointed to the door, and her curt words wrung the hearer's heart. " Go, go, I do not want you unless you tell me the truth. Go, I say."

" Marie ! " he knelt before her, and clasped his hands as he entreated. " Hear me ; Listen, I implore you. Pray believe me ; I am indeed your friend. I admit there is a secret, a painful one. One that there is no need you should know. Trust to my judgment in this. I swear no harm can come to the boy or to you if you let me keep it. Denzil trusted me to do the best for all ; do

you continue to trust me, and all will be well. Let me, oh! do let me keep this pain from you, and forget all my aunt said."

"Forget!" she exclaimed, "I never can forget. And—" here her voice became a wail of bitter anguish, "Denzil knew? Oh! my love, my love, my poor dead love, what sad heritage of woe is this that you have bequeathed to us! What future misery is there in store for me! What danger to my boy!"

"If you will only trust me, there shall no danger come to you or him. Marie, have I ever deceived you, that you should doubt me now? I tell you it is better—it is right you should forget what you heard, and that it is not wise that you should know this secret. Can you not trust me?"

"How can I trust you, when you debar me of my wife's right and mother's privilege? when you hide from me what concerns my dead love and my living treasure? Impossible! Oh! my love. Oh! my darling. How am I to fathom this mystery about our boy!" She stooped her white pained face in her little hands, and wept silent, sad tears.



Lord Rendelsholme was terribly moved. His face was ashy grey as he looked at her attitude of woe. He cleared his throat once or twice, ere he could command his voice, and then he spoke hoarsely—

“Listen to me. Your husband, on his death-bed, spoke to me. His life had had a horrible care, which his unbounded love for you had enabled him to bear alone. Dying, he had to put the burden on another—*he* meant to tell *you*. But, I told him I would gladly bear what trouble there might be, for your sake and the boy’s. If he let me keep this secret, there was no need you should ever know this pain. He let me. With his last breath he trusted me to do the best for all. I have done so; will you not continue to trust me?” He still knelt by her. “Will you not let me save you this unnecessary pain?”

“No,” low and firm, came from behind the little hands that still hid the white, wet face. “I cannot bear the doubt. I was his wife; it is right I should know and share his trouble—specially if he wished it.”

“He wished you should know, for the truth’s sake. I overruled his wishes for your

good. I think I was right. He was glad you should be spared the pain. I still think I was right, that I am justified in keeping this secret, if only you will trust me."

"Den., do not ask me. I cannot do it. I *must* know about my boy—about my little Denzy." Her face was still hid from his view, but the words came clear and distinct, though very low.

Lord Rendelsholme rose up and stood over her ; as with a pained, hoarse voice he murmured, and continued entreaty.

"Oh ! my dear, I would have saved you this ; I would lay down my life to keep trouble from you. Let me—let me save you ; be guided by my knowledge in this matter ; let me keep this secret. I swear no harm can come of it. Marie, let me save you ?"

His earnestness was very touching.

With a white, resolved face she looked up at him.

"I *will* know the truth about my boy."

"Then, I must give you Denzil's letter, and God send your poor heart comfort."

He spoke hesitatingly, hoping she would

relent; she did not, so very slowly and with sad steps he left the room on his unwilling errand.

Half an hour after Marie was reading the tale of her husband's trouble.

After that it was some days before she could summon courage to leave her room. She did not see Lord Rendelsholme till he returned from old Mrs. Devereux's funeral. Then she sent for him, and, with a slow step, he came to her in her little *boudoir*.

Lord Rendelsholme was frightened when he saw his cousin.

The great eyes looked out of her pinched, white face with the mute agony of a wounded dumb animal in their sad sapphire depths. He could find no words to speak as he stood looking at her.

"Thank you, Den.," was her first salute; the words were so unnaturally calm, so gently considerate of his feelings, that they almost unmanned him. "It was very kind of you to try and ward off this trouble—but—but—it could not be." Then she bent her head and broke out into a feeble wail. "My poor, poor, Denzil! My poor, poor, love;

what he must have suffered. He was very, very good to me. Oh! when I remember his great big love, his poor troubled life; his struggles to save me pain, I long to be at rest; to be with my darling—my poor, poor, darling. I wish I slept with him in his quiet, far away grave.”

“Don’t, don’t,” cried Lord Rendelsholme, in his bewildered distress. “Oh! I wish you had never known about this—it is too horrible.”

“Not more horrible than the doubt, Den.” She controlled herself wonderfully. “And, I beg your pardon, it was not to make a moan about myself I sent for you. God will give me strength to bear my cross; but I must speak—arrange—about the boy—Denzy—he has left him to my love; and the darling! I love him dearly; he shall ever be as my own son—but this has changed all the future of our lives for us; we must leave this—leave Rendelsholme. Where shall we go, the boy and I together to hide ourselves?”

“You must go nowhere; you must stay here; this is your rightful place. No one

must ever know this secret but you and I," burst out vehemently from Lord Rendelsholme.

"You forget," she said, gently, with a feeble wan smile, "it is such a terrible complication. I may be no widow. Denzy may be his father's legal heir. *He* is not my child, therefore *I* have no claim to Rendelsholme; and, *he* has no claim as his father's son. Rendelsholme is yours to do with as you will."

"If it is," broke in Lord Rendelsholme, "I will will it to the child—to Denzy. We must keep Denzil's secret—"

"Hush!" she said, "hear me out. I may have been the real wife—if so the boy is—illegitimate?" She stopped and looked at Lord Rendelsholme enquiringly. "We have no proof of how it is?"

"None," assented Lord Rendelsholme, sadly; "I have made every possible enquiry to prove Black Derrick's death ineffectually. I can get no definite information beyond the fact he went slaving, and has never been heard of since. The vagabond may be alive to this day, for all that can be proved about

him; and, unfortunately, there is no doubt about his marriage."

"So I thought; therefore we had better go away; the boy is Denzil's son, he shall be mine, and we will live for each other where no one knows our story, and where our identity will not signify to any one."

"But, no one knows the story now, but you and I. You must not be so mad as to tell it. For the sake of the dead, of Denzil whom you loved, you must keep this secret; save his memory from unmerited disgrace. Listen to me. For the sake of Denzil, and the child, listen to me. Rendelsholme is not mine as long as you live; it is held in trust for your child, or children. You might marry again."

"Marry again!" she exclaimed, looking at him with bitter mockery; "it is not likely."

"Listen," he entreated; "I am simply talking of the matter in a legal point of view; of possibilities. The estate is held for you till you have a child, then it is yours—will never be mine till you die childless, then it is unreservedly mine, to do with as I will. Denzil left the boy to your love, and

my mercy ; if the estate is ever mine, I will leave it to Denzy by will. I swear it. Thus no one will suffer. It will come to him as sure as if he was born the heir. No one will be wronged. You and I can thus screen the memory of the dead. For God's sake be reasonable, and do as I pray you. If you leave Rendelsholme there will be this horrible disgrace of our name. You, I, and little Denzy will all have to suffer, and the name of your dead husband will be spoken of with disrespect." At the word husband she shook her head with sad negative. " Yes, I will call Denzil your husband, for in his own eyes, and before God he stood as such," continued Lord Rendelsholme. " And I say, if you do this rash deed, the memory of your dead husband will be loaded with unmerited obloquy, for who will know or believe the unfortunate details ; unnecessarily you will injure all those you love best ; therefore, I ask you, in the name of the dead whom you loved, and who loved you with all his heart, and for the sake of the little innocent boy, to stay on here as Denzil Tredgar Devereux's widow, with the little son he has left to your

love. Remember, if you leave Rendelsholme, for years it will be uninhabited, unappropriated, unclaimed, for all the years of your life; and then I will give it to Denzy. Even after you have disgraced his name, I will leave it to him. For God's sake think better of your resolve, stay where you are, and let things be as they ought."

"And cheat *you* out of your inheritance; out of the inheritance that has been a curse to us; the root of all this evil!" groaned she.

"The inheritance is worthless in my eyes, unless I may in this way make use of my privilege."

"But—your children—your heirs?"

"I have no children—no heir. If ever I have any heirs, I have plenty to provide for them with; this estate is *not* mine; never will be more than a sacred trust. If ever I possess the power I will will it as I say, to the boy. For the sake of your dead husband, whose love would have shielded you if he could, and for the sake of his son, the little helpless child left to our care, be guided by me."

"For Denzil's sake—for the boy's sake—



whose innocent life would be branded through no fault of his, perhaps I ought—" she put her hand to her head in doubt.

"My dear, for their sakes you must be guided by me—" then he sat silent.

After a few moments she spoke.

"You are very good, very kind; for their sakes be it as you say, and, for myself God give me patience to bear this awful trial as I ought. Den., dear, thank you for what you have done for them—for what you tried to save me from. You are good and kind and true—the best man I ever knew."

"Hush! not a word of thanks for fulfilling a simple duty; but thanks to you, Marie, for yielding your wishes to my entreaties. We have agreed for the sake of the dead, and of the living to bury this sorrow between us. No one must ever know—Denzy least of all suspect the history of the past. It would be cruel to poison the child's life. Remember, he is Denzil's son—he must be treated as yours also; all must be as it was before you heard this mournful story. Believe me, dear, in doing this we will be doing right."

"I hope so," she said, sadly. "It seems as if there was nothing else left for me to do." She lay back thoroughly exhausted, the heavy lids drooped over her sad eyes, through the long lashes of which the big tear drops slowly oozed.

Lord Rendelsholme looked at her compassionately, the grief of the stricken woman was very sacred in his eyes—instinctively he knew no words of his could now heal or soothe her gaping, smarting wounds, but instinctively he guessed what would be the best comfort he could give her. Quickly he left the room, sought the nursery—seized the laughing boy, who joyful jumped to his arms, and with the willing prisoner, speedily returned to the *boudoir*.

"There, mamma, is the little heir of Rendelsholme, take care of him, and be sure to make him a good man?"

So saying he placed the boy in her arms and softly left the room.

Two years more elapsed—five had passed since the platoon had been fired, and the hurried prayers been read over the soldier's grave at Lucknow. All this time Lord

Rendelsholme had conscientiously fulfilled his duty as guardian to little Denzy, and had been a trusted friend and counsellor to the boy's gentle mother.

Mrs. Devereux's weeds were laid aside, but she still wore, and meant to wear, to the end of her life the sombre black that toned best with the subdued tinge of her mind.

Not that she went about with meekly folded hands and downcast eyes—no such thing. She was gentle, cheery, pleasant, very kind—overflowing with sympathy and tenderness to all who were in trouble. She made no parade of her grief, and acted as mistress of Rendelsholme with a calm, sweet dignity that won her golden praise from all.

It was the early winter. Lord Rendelsholme and a few friends had been staying at Rendelsholme ; amongst the guests had been Miss Stuart-Moore, and she had been the last of the strangers to leave. At Mrs. Devereux's suggestion Lord Rendelsholme had driven Miss Stuart-Moore over to her aunt where she was to remain.

Mrs. Devereux had had a little plan in thus sending these two off together. May Stuart-

Moore was a dear girl—her dearest friend. Lord Rendelsholme was her very dear friend and cousin. What if she could unite her friends? She earnestly desired he would marry May.

Mrs. Devereux was sitting thoughtfully over the library fire, wondering would her wish come true, when the door opened, and Lord Rendelsholme, returned from his escort-duty, walked in. He threw himself into an easy chair on the opposite side of the fire, and with a sigh of relief began—

“This is delightful! it is so much pleasanter to be alone with you than lost in a crowd. For the last week I have not been able to monopolise your society for one moment—I am *exigeant*. Marie, I want to have you to myself—you—I have something to say.”

He was evidently excited—looked pleased, and the wish being father to the thought, Mrs. Devereux instantly imagined May Stuart-Moore was to be the theme of his discourse, so with a pleased alacrity she responded—

“Yes, it is charming to have an oppor-

tunity for a confidential chat, though at the same time I thoroughly enjoyed our visitors. May is such a dear sweet girl—I can't tell you how I miss her, she has always been such a good kind friend to me."

"She is your good friend," he assented, with significant earnestness. "We had a most interesting talk during our drive, she is a most charming girl—I like her greatly."

"I am so glad—delighted!" exclaimed Mrs. Devereux, smiling with pleasure, as she anticipated further revelations from her cousin.

"You seem quite as attached to her as she is to you?"

"Dear May! she is one of the dearest friends I have. After yourself I think I may say she is my best friend—she has always been kind and true to me. There is nobody I have a higher opinion of—" She paused a moment, he was looking absently into the fire, so she finished up with a question, "What were you and May talking about?"

Then he looked round with a softened, sober light on his handsome, refined face, and said very sedately—

"The future. I mean *our* future."

"Yours and hers! Then they are to be united. I am so pleased."

"Not *her's* and mine," said he slowly, "but *yours* and mine." Then he paused.

Mrs. Devereux breathed a gentle sigh of disappointment, she had hoped he was going to announce his engagement to her friend. She did not take in the full meaning of his words—*her* future and his could only mean a continuance of their present cousinly trust and full confidence in each other. Therefore she was little prepared for his next words—words spoken with the tenderest, truest feeling, the same that lit up his earnest, anxious face.

"Marie! I loved you seven years ago. Then I asked you to be my wife—you sent me away, but you did not kill my love. All these years it has been in my heart, and has grown deeper and stronger every hour. My darling! again I ask you, let me be your husband—to cherish, to comfort, and to keep you till death us two does part."

"Oh! Den., no, no, no, I cannot do it. I to marry. Never! I—think of what I am—and—think of little Denzy."

"I have thought of everything. You are the dearest, the *only* woman in the world for me. Denzy's future is provided for—his secret will be safe between us. Forget the unhappy past my own sweet love and learn to be happy with me. My darling, you might."

"Forget the past! forget Denzil! my poor, poor love, sleeping in his far away lonely grave—never. I have no love left—of that sort—all I had I gave him, it lies buried in his grave. Den., dear, you have my respect, my highest esteem—but, I can give you nothing more."

"I would rather have your respect and esteem than the love of any other woman in the world," cried he. "Come to me with that and I will be blessed—thoroughly content."

"No, Den. I would wrong you and myself if I did. The trials of my life have made me unlike other women."

"Unlike! Yes, far superior to every other woman," broke in he, at which she shook her head.

"No, but, set me apart, prevent me from

doing what other women might do. I can never marry—don't you understand, Denzil left me a trust—a something to do for his dear sake—he left me his boy—left him to my love. If I married and had a child there would be conflicting duties that alone would keep me as I am, but there are other reasons, instincts; do not ask me to explain but believe—I cannot do this thing.”

“Marrying me—who knows everything—would be different from another, and about Denzy, my dearest, we could arrange *that*. Do not wreck both our lives for a dream, I entreat you.”

His quiet earnestness was far more eloquent than any passion would have been. She felt it deeply as she answered slowly—

“My life was wrecked years ago—wrecked with my love. Den., dear, you and I can never be more than friends—the dearest, best, and truest of friends. I am sorry for you, but you must not let this wreck your life. You are young; there are many women who would—May would make you a very dear wife; I always hoped you would choose her.”



"Have you given me your final answer?" he asked quietly.

"Yes."

"Well, then my future is settled for me. I shall never have a wife, and you will have to be kind to the old bachelor in years to come. Denzy will be the only child between us."

"I am sorry, very sorry. I had hoped there would be happier days in store for you," said Mrs. Devereux gently.

"None happier than God will see fit to send me watching the boy and doing a brother's part to you, my one love. If your mind is irrevocably made up I will lay this thought aside and say no more about it. Is it?" asked he once again.

"Yes."

He bowed his head and looked very grave as he said, faintly—

"Very well, then I submit."

He did submit. And for many years acted a true brother's part to his adopted sister and guardian to her boy.

Then God took him. Lord Rendelsholme died, as his mother had done, of consump-

tion; his last days being soothed by the tender care of his Cousin Marie and the cheering society of her tall, handsome boy; to whom, as the last of the Devereuxs, Lord Rendelsholme left all he possessed, positive and recurrent; and who, naturally, as his father's son, succeeded to the family title.

\* \* \* \* \*

This year, 1880,—in her favourite seat in the bay window at Rendelsholme is seated the fair, lovely, and still young-looking Mrs. Devereux waiting an expected arrival.

The door opens, and a singularly, handsome, elegant, young man dashes in.

“Mammy, dearest, how are you?” Young Lord Rendelsholme stooped and took his mother up in his strong arms kissing her with glad affection. “How bright and well you look! Wish me joy! I have done it! Edith Leigh has promised to be my wife, and I am the happiest man in all England! Are you satisfied, little mother?”

“Perfectly contented. Happy in your happiness, my own darling; Edith is a sweet

"And the one of all whom  
 chosen for you," answered the  
 as he returned his answer with  
 her cheerful heart opening a  
 loneliness, bright, young man  
 yet a smile in his frank, young  
 the father whose strong love  
 lighted in the land.

"Oh! you dear, delightful man  
 be. - There is no one in the world  
 pure with my heart unless it be  
 sweet, darling wife!" What a luck  
 me to be blessed with two such  
 angels!" I declare I am so happy  
 know what to do with myself."

THE END.



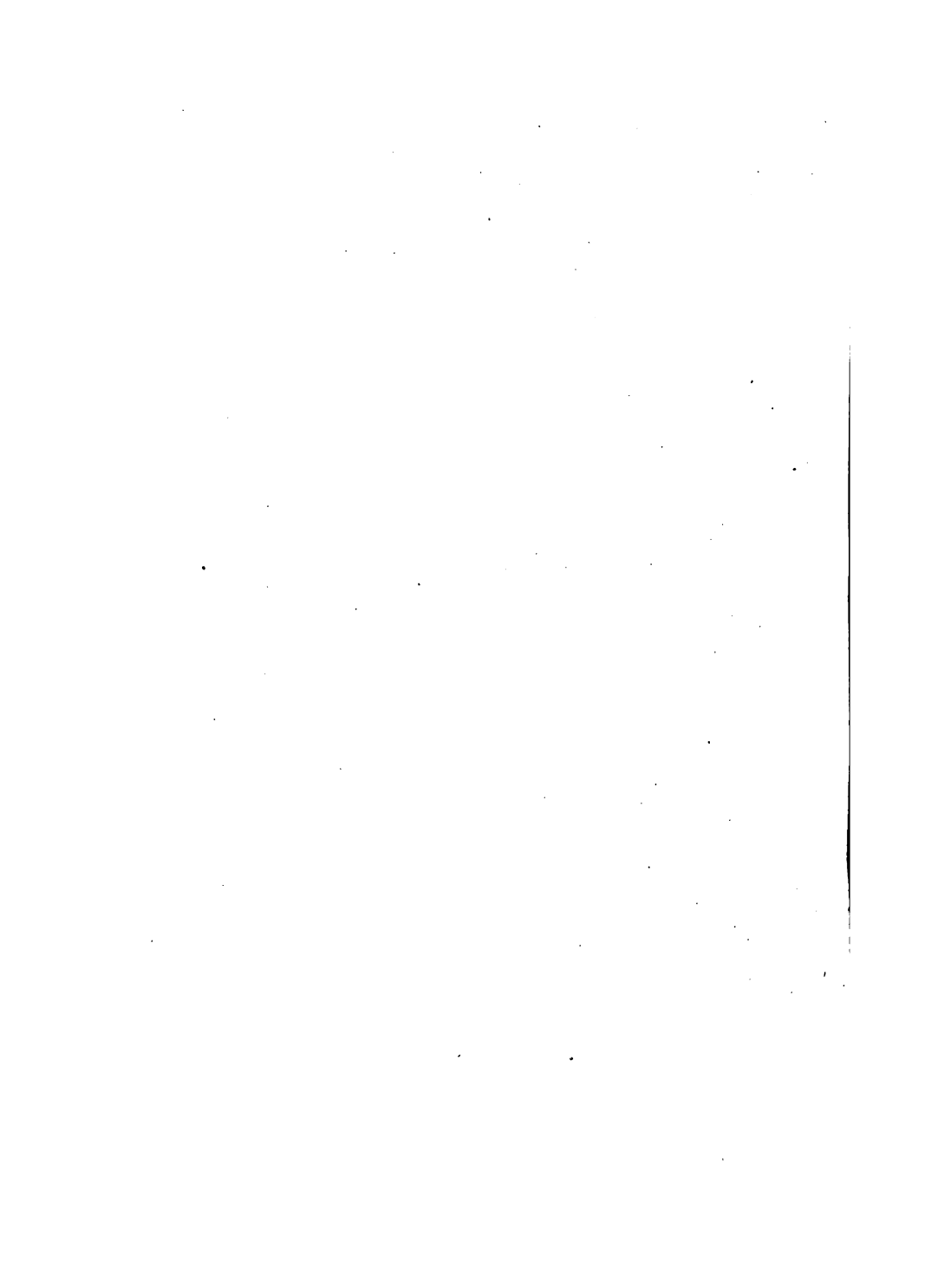
girl, the one of all others I would have chosen for you," answered the mother gently, as she returned his kisses with happy pride, her thankful heart rejoicing greatly in this handsome, bright, young man; so like, and yet so unlike in his fresh, young happiness to the father whose strong love had been blighted in the bud.

"Oh! you dear, delightful mammy," cried he. "There is no one in the world to compare with my Edith unless it be your own sweet, darling self! What a lucky fellow I am to be blessed with two such guardian angels! I declare I am so happy I do not know what to do with myself."

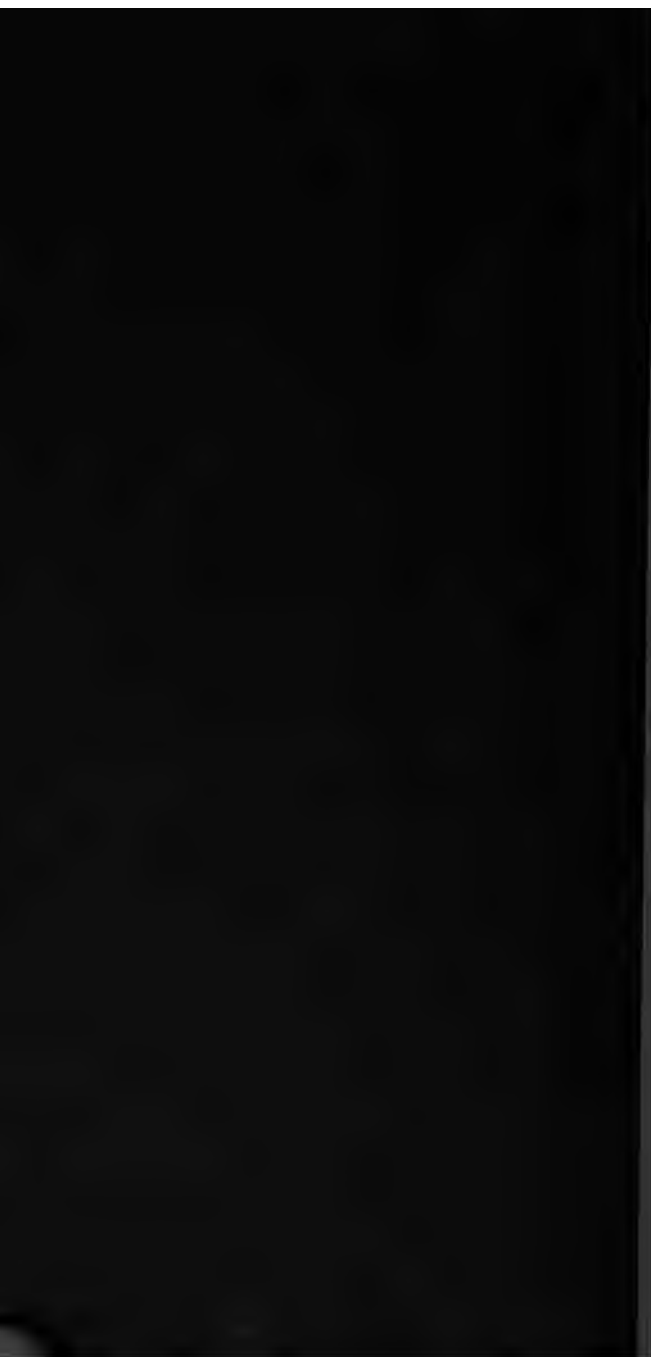
THE END.













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